OCT., 1906

10 CENTS

The Popular Magazine

HARVEST OF GOOD STORIES IN THIS ISSUE

Ingersoll

WATCHES

8,000 Ingersoll Watches a day—made, regulated, sold and guaranteed; and every one of them stem-wind and push-in stem-set!

The Ingersoll is a true-timing, long-enduring, handsome, dependable watch. Sold to you by any one of 50,000 reputable dealers at less than the factory cost of regulating an ordinary watch - at less than the repair-cost of a broken mainspring in other watches.

The Ingersoll is

The Only "Dollar Watch"

but there are all sorts of make-shift imitations sold at a dollar and even less. A dollar is not much to pay for a watch, but it's altogether too much to throw away Be sure you say "Ingersoll" and look for that name on the dial. Then you'll put your dollar into a real time-keeper, backed up by a guarantee that MEANS something. Only about 40 Ingersoll watches out of 14,000 ever need the guarantee—but you get it just the same.

OTHER INGERSOLLS:

THE ECLIPSE is the second Ingersoll in popularity and is a more elaborate watch than the Yankee. Solid German-silver case, engine-turned if desired; it has a hinged back and porcelate dial. Also finished in Gun Metal or Gold Plate, $1.50.

THE TRIUMPH is more elaborate in style than the Eclipse. The case is plain, except for a fancy engine-turned center band. It is of solid white metal, with the heaviest possible plating of silver. The movement plate is a beautiful imitation of hand-engraving in oxidized relief. Also in brilliant gun-metal finish, $1.75.

The Midget—Ladies' Model—$2.00.

The "Midget" **looks** like a high-priced watch. It winds and sets the same way; it is **regulated** the same way, and it **keeps time** that way, too. It marks one of the three most revolutionary events in the making of timepieces. The production of the first Ingersoll Watch at a Dollar; this year's announcement of the New Ingersoll Dollar Watch made stem-wind and stem-set; and this latest triumph of Ingersoll patented machinery and factory organization—the dainty but dependable little "Midget," $2.00.

BOOKLET FREE.

Ingersoll Watches are sold in your own neighborhood by some good merchant. You will most likely see the Ingersoll sign in his window or on his counter. But if not locally obtainable, they are sent postpaid by us.

Every Genuine Ingersoll Watch has the Name INGERSOLL on the Dial.

The Ingersoll Dollar Chain has more gold than any $2.00 chain. Made in 12 patterns. Circular Free. Sold everywhere or postpaid for $1.00. Look for the Ingersoll guarantee tag on each.

Robt. H. Ingersoll & Bro. 45 JEWELERS COURT, NEW YORK.

Mr. Springett's success merely indicates how my thorough training enables graduates to secure positions in the shortest time.

Aug. 13, 1905, Mr. Springett wrote: "I have already secured two well-paying contracts. During my study I had occasion to write you that I was 'conscious of my limitations.' I am astonished to find myself at fault, and the barriers I considered impassable have totally disappeared. It is now my ambition to become the leading furniture advertiser of New York."

May 19, 1906, Mr. Springett again wrote: "I have for a year been advertising manager of the Manhattan Bedding Co., 527-541 West 23rd St., New York, and its parent company, the Rome Metallic Bed Co., with branches in Boston, Philadelphia, Baltimore and Cleveland. The sales have increased from 20% to 50% monthly, averaging 35% throughout the year."

Demand for My Graduates Three Times Greater Than in Any Previous Year.

More Examples of Doubling Salaries—$1,200 to $6,000 a Year.

Mr. Hayes originally was skeptical as to whether any one could be made a skilled ad writer through correspondence instruction. The fact, however, that Powell graduates are everywhere recognized by the real authorities of the country as the best, and that they are eagerly sought by advertisers, induced him to enroll with me. He writes:

"I feel I owe my present position as advertising manager of the clothing house of A. J. Rogers Co., Dallas, Tex., almost entirely to the Powell System of Advertising Instruction. I investigated several other courses before deciding on yours, and am confident your System is far superior to that of any other school. I heartily recommend it to any one desiring to learn result-bringing advertising."

Like many others, Mr. Hayes discovered that the Powell System has created more high-salaried ad men than all others combined.

All thoroughly posted advertising authorities agree that the advertising business is to-day in its infancy, and that the thoroughly skillful ad writer is being earnestly sought by business men as never before.

I have had more than three times as many advertisers write me in 1906 for Powell graduates, compared with any other year, and I may add that they are often willing to pay considerably more than $25.00 a week, the average salary at the start, it being nothing uncommon for a new graduate to get a contract netting $40.00 or more per week.

And even more encouraging for the ambitious young man or woman is the added fact that my former students are not obliged to long remain in these starting positions.

Year by year the salary standard for good ad writers is raised. More responsible positions are multiplying, and I am constantly able to assist those who finished the Powell Sytem from one to five years ago to berths paying double and quadruple their first year's salaries—from $2,500 to $3,000 a year, and over.

And now a brief word about the superiority of my instruction. From the very start it has been the only System endorsed by the authorities as the best. Agents who will only hire the really skillful ad writer, advertise for "Powell graduates only," and constantly advise prospective students to come to me.

The Powell System is the school of practical experience, and under my personal guidance, the student becomes an original, result-bringing advertiser. No other advertising instructor has a tenth of my acknowledged success. Powell graduates to all others combined sitions is an important considera want the best training.

There is no vocation like ably quick returns, and Powell System.

My two free b sults"—tell ab are expected They also te business.

GEORGE H. POWELL, 165 Metropo

Partly Paid For Books

One Man's Loss Is Another Man's Gain

This Is Your Opportunity

Read Carefully

We have on hand sixteen (16) sets of the "Makers of History," in thirty-two (32) magnificent volumes, bound in cloth and half-leather, that have been partly paid for by some one. These sixteen (16) sets were subscribed for by our customers and delivered to them, and we received in payment about one-half of our price; then the books were returned to us on account of the inability of the subscriber to pay us the balance due. The books have been thoroughly inspected, and where a volume was not absolutely good as new, a new volume was substituted; thus, these sixteen (16) sets are perfect in every respect; this we guarantee.

The regular price of the thirty-two (32) volumes in cloth is $32 a set, and in special library or half-leather binding is $48 a set, but as we have already received about one-half of the price of these books from our customers, we have decided to let these special sets, only sixteen (16) in number, go to those who first apply, for less than half-price, upon small monthly payments. Read coupon carefully.

The "Makers of History" are the most entertaining and instructive friends you could possibly have in your home. Each volume is a complete narrative of a man or woman who, in their time, made things happen. There is not a dull page in the entire 32 volumes. No set of books published can compare in interest or instruction with the "Makers of History." They are as absorbing as anything you can imagine. They are the kind of books that keep people up late reading. Once you start to read any of these volumes you dislike to stop until the book is finished. Hundreds of thousands know and own these books. Their sale is ever increasing, because they are real books to be read and enjoyed—not to be put away and never looked at.

Read Carefully: Remember, these books are partly paid for, so you only have to pay half-price. We extend to you free examination; if the books are not found to be satisfactory, return them at our expense; you do not take any risk; it costs you nothing to have the books sent to you; if you do not care to keep them after seeing them, they are to be returned, all charges collect.

32 Magnificent Books, less than **49** Cents a Volume

TITLES OF BOOKS.

William the Conquerer
Alexander the Great
Alfred the Great
Richard I.
Cyrus the Great
Genghis Khan
Xerxes
Julius Caesar
Pyrrhus
Charles I.
Josephine
Marie Antoinette
Hernando Cortez
King Philip
Louis Philippe
Queen Elizabeth
Cleopatra
[illegible]garet of Anjou
[illegible]rd II.
[illegible] Great
[illegible]eat

Sign and mail coupon to us to-day. We say to-day because we know that these sixteen (16) sets will all be claimed almost immediately.

This is really the opportunity of a lifetime. You incur no obligation and it costs you nothing to investigate the greatest book bargain [illegible]r offered.

We Recommend the Special Library Binding

PARTLY PAID BOOK COUPON

Harper's History Club, 275 Mercer St., New York

You may send me for inspection and approval one set of the

MAKERS OF HISTORY

32 volumes, bound in the style indicated by having the "X" beside it.

Cloth Binding (regular price $32 per set). I will pay for same, if I decide to keep the books, as follows: 50 cents after I examine them, and $1.00 a month for fifteen months.

Special Library Binding (regular price $48 per set). I will pay for same, if I decide to keep the books, as follows: 50 cents after I examine them, and $1.50 a month for fifteen months.

It is understood you send to me upon approval the "Makers of History," in 32 volumes, and if I decide not to keep the books I am to return them to you, charges collect.

NAME.....

STREET.....

CITY OR TOWN.....

STATE.....

P. O.

[illegible]er's History Club, 275 Mercer Street, New York, N. Y.

The Best that man has spoken and the best that man has written

While they last we are going to give away eighteen (18) sets of the most interesting Library of Literature ever published. This is an important announcement—read carefully—it will interest you.

WE have on hand eighteen (18) sets of one of the best sets of books ever published—The Library of Oratory—fifteen magnificent volumes, beautifully illustrated, and artistically and durably bound in combination art cloths, with full gold backs like illustration below, the regular price of which is $37.50.

These 18 sets are a remainder of an edition and we have decided to dispose of them for about half price, and to insure their quick sale to accept small monthly payments and to give away with each of these 18 sets of the Library of Oratory one complete set of the most famous of all libraries of literature, Knight's Library of "Half Hours with the Best Authors," in six attractive volumes bound in combination art cloth, full gold backs and gold tops, worth $12.00 per set.

The Library of Oratory is a most interesting set of books. It contains reading for every mood of one's mind and the best the world has produced. Every question that has aided humanity in its progress during the past 2,500 years is here, presented by the master minds of the world.

Some of the Many Orators Represented

Pericles
Socrates
Æschines
Demosthenes
Catiline
Cicero
Cæsar
Cato
Luther
Cranmer
John Knox
John Pym
Cromwell
Fenelon
Cotton Mather
Massillon
Robert Walpole
Lord Chesterfield
John Wesley
Benjamin Franklin
Samuel Adams
Edmund Burke
George Washington
John Adams
Patrick Henry
John Hancock
Thomas Paine
Thomas Jefferson
Josiah Quincy
Marat
John Jay
Mirabeau
James Madison
Red Jacket
Carnot
Daniel Webster
James Monroe
Robespierre
William Pitt
Danton
Moreau
Andrew Jackson
De Witt Clinton
Duke of Wellington
Napoleon
Tecumseh
Daniel O'Connell
Henry Clay
Robert Emmet
Abraham Lincoln
Robert C. Winthrop
Hannibal Hamlin
Count Cavour
Cassius M. Clay
John Bright
Wendell Phillips
Charles Sumner
Horace Greeley
Wm. M. Thackeray
Garibaldi
Jefferson Davis
Napoleon III
Oliver W. Holmes
Gladstone
Victor Hugo
Kossuth
Lord Beaconsfield
John Brown
George Bancroft
Wm. Henry Seward
Joseph Chamberlain
John Morley
Lord Rosebery
Emile Zola
Chas. H. Parkhurst
Henry Cabot Lodge
Joseph H. Choat
Mark Twain
John Hay
Theodore Roosevelt

WHO would not desire to hear the following Orators and their Orations if it were possible

Pericles—"Funeral Oration."
Demosthenes—"Oration on the Crown."
Cicero—"Oration Against Catiline."
Cæsar—"Speech in the Roman Senate on the Conspiracy of Catiline."
Massillon—"The Curse of a Malignant Tongue."
Garibaldi—"Speech to His Soldiers."
Daniel O'Connell—"Ireland Worth Dying For."
Robert Emmet—"Speech When Under Sentence of Death."
Patrick Henry—"Give Me Liberty or Give Me Death."
Marat—"Speech Before the National Convention."
Red Jacket—"Speech at Fort Stanwix."
Daniel Webster—"Reply to Hayne."
Robespierre—"Against Granting the King a Trial."
Danton—"To Dare, to Dare Again, Always to Dare."
Moreau—"Speech in His Own Defence."
Napoleon—"Farewell to the Old Guard."
Abraham Lincoln—"First Inaugural."
Henry Ward Beecher—"Effect of the Death of Lincoln."
Emile Zola—"Appeal for Dreyfus."
Theodore Roosevelt—"A Nation of Pioneers."
Prince Bismarck—"A Plea for Imperial Armament."
George Washington—"First Inaugural Address."

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Swift	Lytton
Johnson	Byron
Dante	Dryden
Shelley	Hope
Goldsmith	Cowper
Verne	Austen
Fielding	Smollett
Locke	Addison
Webster	Pope
Chalmers	Butler
Latimer	Landor
Verplanck	Hume
Jefferson	Guizot
Carlyle	Holgate
Macaulay	Penn
Longfellow	Lauder
Southey	Godwin
Shakespeare	Tukerman
Burton	Young
Audubon	Topham
Lamb	Bede
Gibbon	Fr...
Bancroft	
Cervant...	
Hall...	
T...	

DO NOT NEGLECT THIS OPPORTUNITY

You take no risk. We will send both sets for examination, charges prepaid. If they are not satisfactory, return them at our expense. **Could anything be fairer?** We know you will keep the books and pay the small price we ask for them cheerfully.

Description of the free Knight's "Library of Half Hours with the Best Authors."

This Work contains the very best that has ever been written in the various branches of literature. The best in science, philosophy, history, biography, poetry, humor, travel, fiction, oratory and essays. In fact, all the best and lasting thoughts of the world.

If you accept this offer you will always have in your possession two of the finest and most interesting sets of books ever published.

One containing **the best that man has spoken,** the other **the best that man has written,** and they will cost you only a few cents a day for a few months. **We guarantee** this to be the greatest bargain we have ever offered. Enclosed you will find request-for-inspection blank, sign and mail same promptly and secure these two grand sets of books worth $49.50 for only $1.00 after examination and $1.50 a month for twelve months.

These two sets of books should be in every home; this is your opportunity. Remember, one costs you only about half-price and the other is absolutely free if you request at once.

THE LIBRARY OF ORATORY ANCIENT and MODERN

7,000 pages. 15 magnificent volumes of the choicest orations that man has spoken. With brilliant, forceful essays and biographies on the orators by such writers as Hamilton Wright Mabie, Lyman Abbott, Henry James, Leslie Stephen, Thomas Wentworth Higginson, Brander Matthews, Carl Schurz, Paul Leicester Ford, Hamlin Garland, and Henry Cabot Lodge.

Cut Out, Sign, and Mail Now

FREE LIBRARY OFFER

Request for Inspection

A. L. FOWLE, 8 Washington Place, New York, N. Y.

Dear Sir: You may send me, all charges prepaid upon inspection, "The Library of Oratory," 15 volumes, size 7¾ x 5½ inches, beautifully illustrated, bound in combination Art Cloths, red backs and green sides, with gold back stamping, the most attractive library binding ever made; also one set of Knight's "Library of Half Hours with the Best Authors," six beautiful volumes.

After examining the books, if I decide to keep them, I will pay you for "The Library of Oratory" only (you to present me with Knight's "Library of Half Hours with the Best Authors", $... after examination and $1.50 a month for 12 months. If, after examination, I decide not to keep "The Library of Oratory" send both sets of books to you, all charges collect.

Name.....

Address.. ....

P.O. .....

LEARN TO WRITE ADVERTISEMENTS

Earn from $25.00 to $100.00 a week

Some of our students were $10—$12—and $15 a week men in various lines of business—stenographers, clerks, bookkeepers, salesmen, etc. They greatly increased their salaries and many of them outstripped even our high expectations by jumping into the ranks of $10,000.00 men in less than a year after graduating.

Some of our students were what you might call big-salaried men when they enrolled—already in the $10,000.00 a year class; but a knowledge of advertising made it possible for them to double and treble their incomes. The amount of your present income has nothing to do with the value of our instruction to you.

It all depends upon the use you will make of our training. Advertisement writers make from $25.00 to $100.00 a week, AND THE KNOWLEDGE WILL INCREASE ANY MAN'S ABILITY 25% to 100%.

Mr. C. L. Buschmann, of Indianapolis, had a minor interest in a small factory; our course of training showed him how he might turn this small interest into a large one. He used his advertising knowledge to such good effect that he was able to re-organize with a capital stock of $75,000.00 and is now Vice-President and Manager of the firm which is doing a tremendous business.

A country school teacher out in Washington,—Mr. A. W. Armstrong—made up his mind to benefit by our instructions and he is now Advertising Manager for the McCarthy Dry Goods Co., of Seattle, on $1800.00 a year.

A drug clerk in the obscure little town of Del Monte,Cal.,—Mr. Everet T. Mateer,—chose to make something of himself, studied with us, and less than a year later, went flying to New York to accept a splendid position with the M. P. Gould Co.—another $1800.00 a year man.

A window trimmer in Fond du lac, Wisc.,—Mr. J. W. Fisk,—decided he ought to be worth more than $75 a month to his firm—his salary as a window trimmer—took our course, and is now their efficient Advertising Manager, and in the $1800.00 a year class.

A young farmer in Michigan—Mr. C. V. R. Fullenwider—made up his mind to improve on his $1.50 a-day-and-board record, studied this course all winter and the next fall secured a splendid position as Advertising Manager with a large furniture store in Grand Rapids, Mich.

It isn't necessary to go on listing these successes indefinitely—if you are interested in bettering your financial condition, you will WRITE FOR OUR LARGE, HANDSOME PROSPECTUS, which tells all about our students' rapid advancement, and which lays the whole advertising field plainly and interestingly before you. TAUGHT BY MAIL in your spare hours. Write while the subject is fresh in your mind.

Page-Davis Company

Address **90 Wabash Avenue, CHICAGO**
Either Office **150 Nassau Street, NEW YORK**

...D ADDRESS, AND SEND THIS COUPON ...hout cost.

How to Get on the Stage

¶ Write for our booklet which is full of valuable suggestions and of great importance to any one desiring to take up the dramatic profession. It is very interesting and contains the photographs and sketches of the lives of prominent actors and actresses. It points the way to stage success with the least possible trouble. Sent free on receipt of 4 cents in stamps to cover postage.

Address Dept. 5.

Bureau of Dramatic Art
Indianapolis, Ind.

SHORTHAND IN 30 DAYS

We absolutely guarantee to teach shorthand complete in only thirty days. You can learn in spare time in your own home, no matter where you live. No need to spend months as with old systems. Boyd's Syllabic System is easy to learn—easy to write—easy to read. Simple. Practical. Speedy. Sure. No ruled lines—no positions—no shading as in other systems. No long lists of word signs to confuse. Only nine characters to learn and you have the entire English language at your absolute command.

The best system for stenographers, private secretaries, newspaper reporters and railroad men. Lawyers, ministers, teachers, physicians, literary folk and business men and women may now learn shorthand for their own use. Does not take continual daily pratice as with other systems. Our graduates hold high grade positions everywhere. Send to-day for booklets, testimonials, etc.

CHICAGO CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOLS
975 Chicago Opera House Block, Chicago, Ill.

College Preparatory Course

offers the ambitious young man exceptional opportunities. Education is the finger-post that points the way on the road to success. There is a simple, unique, way to prepare yourself for en rance to Resident Engineering Schools without losing a moment of time from your present work. Let us show you **how** at our expense. Merely clip this advertisement, mail it to-day and receive **FREE** our 200 p. hand-book describing our 60 courses in all branches of

ENGINEERING

Write to-day—you lose by delay.

American School of Correspondence, Chicago, Ill.

(Popular Oct.)

MAN WANTED

In the REAL ESTATE BUSINESS. No canvassing or soliciting required. Experience unnecessary if honest, ambitious, and willing to learn the business thoroughly by mail and become our local representative. Many make $300 to $500 monthly. Write at once for full particulars. Address either office.

NATIONAL CO-OPERATIVE REALTY CO.

Suite 51, 52 Dearborn St. Chicago, Ill. -or- **Suite 51, 1410 "H" St. Washington, D.C.**

MY BOOK FREE

THE KEY TO SUCCESS

"How to Remember"

Sent Free to Readers of this Publication.

Stop Forgetting

You are no greater intellectually than your memory. My course is simple, inexpensive. Increases business capacity, social standing; gives an ale t, ready memory for names, faces, business details. Develops will, conversation, speaking, etc. My Booklet, "How to Remember," sent free.

DICKSON SCHOOL OF MEMORY, 987 Kimball Hall, CHICAGO

Be an Actor

OR ACTRESS

No profession so fascinating or profitable.

I teach you by mail, so you can go at once on the stage. Established 25 years. Send 10c. silver or stamps for illustrated booklet, scenes of plays, actors, actresses, graduates of school, how to get on the stage, art of making up, etc. Address

Henry Dickson School of Acting, 200 Kimball Hall, Chicago

STUDY LAW AT HOME

The original school. Instruction by mail adapted to every one. Recognized by courts and educators. Experienced and competent instructors. Takes spare time only. Three courses—Preparatory, Business, College. Prepares for practice. Will better your condition and prospects in business. Students and graduates everywhere. Full particulars and **special offer** free.

The Sprague Correspondence School of Law,
491 Majestic Bldg, Detroit, Mich.

I Teach Sign Painting

Show Card Writing or Lettering

by mail and guarantee success. Only field not overcrowded. My instruction is unequaled because practical, personal and thorough. Easy terms. Write for large catalogue.

CHAS. J. STRONG, Pres.,
Detroit School of Lettering
Dept. 32, Detroit, Mich.

"Oldest and Largest School of Its Kind"

"Feminology"

Complete table of contents and sample pages sent *FREE.*

A plainly told, scientific book about woman, is one of the most fascinating, intensely interesting and valuable works ever written. It tells **woman** the vital thing she must know about **maidenhood** and **motherhood,** and is especially interesting to parents. It treats of ...age, parental inheritance, ...culture, care of babies, ... treatment of female ... nursing, children's ... care, personal ...nation that is all ... and happiness. ...ully illustrated

..."Feminology" ...needless mis-

...book contains. ...Chicago, Ill.

PUBLISH A MAGAZINE IN YOUR OWN TOWN

We furnish 64 pages illustrated matter and handsome colored cover monthly. You select your own title, insert local reading and advertising and put magazine out under your own name as editor and proprietor. Particulars and samples for postage (10c). Address

BROOKS MAGAZINE SYNDICATE,
628 GRANITE BUILDING, ST. LOUIS, MO.

SUPERFLUOUS HAIR CURED

Electrozol Massage Cream is made to destroy hair—and does it. Effects only the hair, whitens and beautifies the skin. Nothing compares with it. Composed of two cerates which are applied by massage a few moments. This causes atrophy of the hair bulb; thus the hair dies. Contained in collapsible tubes. Price $2.00; guaranteed. **Sample large enough for any mild case 50 cents.** Money back if unsatisfactory.

ELECTROZOL CO., Dept. 914, DETROIT, MICH.

...tisers, please mention The Popular Magazine

Some Shorthand Fees

Dudley M. Kent, Official Court Reporter at Colorado, Texas, Earns $650 a Month

By W. H. D. MARR

FEW people have kept pace with the development of shorthand enough to realize the great opportunities it offers to the young people of to-day. In the commercial world, the advantage the stenographer enjoys over other employees, is fully shown by the numberless positions of trust held by those who began their business careers by receiving from dictation the secrets of the various lines of business given by the heads of the firms. As a profession, the court reporter receives a salary ranging from $3,000 to $6,000 a year, while one firm in Chicago does a business approximating $100,000 annually writing shorthand.

DUDLEY M. KENT

The success of Dudley M. Kent, the official reporter of the Thirty-second Judicial District of Texas, with headquarters at Colorado, Texas, illustrates the advantages to be derived from a thorough knowledge of expert shorthand. A page from his journal, printed below, shows that in a single month he earned $650 25. Another reporter in the same state, Mr. J. A. Lord, of Waco, earned $1,282 in one month—more evidence of the great value of real shorthand. The page from Mr. Kent's journal follows:

2.	Tran. 70 pp. Fielding vs. Gann	$35.00
3.	Tran. 62 pp. State vs. Vance	31.00
10.	Tran. 153 pp. Felker vs. T. & P. Ry. Co.	86.00
	Carbon of same	7.50
11.	Rep. Wilkes vs. Same	5.00
11.	Tran. 45 pp. same	27.50
13.	Tran. 143 pp. Coggin vs. T. & P. Ry. Co.	83.00
14.	Miscel. Pleadings for T. & P. Ry., 50 pp.	25.00
20.	Tran. 41 pp. Red vs. Russell	20.00
20.	Rep. County Ct., Scoggin & B. vs. T. & P. Ry. Co	5.00
	Tran. 52 pp. same	26.00
	70 pp. Coggin & Dunaway vs. T.	50.00
	W. R. Logan vs. Same	5.00
	Stokes vs. Frisco Ry.	5.00
		22.50
	vs. T. & P	2.50
	Same	2.50
	Same	2.50
		12.50
	me	2.50
		6.00
		2.50
		8.50
29.	Special charge work	1.00
30.	Rep. Co. Ct., Gray & Monroe vs. T. & P. Ry.	2.50
30.	Rep. Co. Ct., W. A. Coggin vs. Same	2.50
31.	Rep. Co. Ct., John Lovelady vs. Same	2.50
31.	Miscel. orders, motions, etc., for T. & P. Ry. Co	5.00
16, 17, 18.	Tran. State of Texas vs. Jake McKinney	58.75
31.	Per diem as official stenographer	105.00
		$650.25

In Chicago, the firm of Walton, James & Ford does a business of $100,000 a year in shorthand work, being the largest shorthand firm in the world. Aside from this immense business they conduct the Success Shorthand School, which teaches that expert shorthand so desired by commercial firms, and with which the most expert work is performed. Dudley M. Kent and James A. Lord were both graduates of the correspondence course of this school, and throughout the United States, Canada and Mexico successful commercial stenographers, private secretaries and expert court reporters—graduates of this school—are living evidence of the superiority of the home instruction given by these experts. People who formerly had no knowledge of shorthand have been made capable stenographers by home study of the Success Shorthand System—the most legible, accurate and contracted system known—and by its use have become capable of holding the most lucrative positions. Stenographers writing other systems have been made experts by the improvements which these practical men have devised.

By writing to-day for information in regard to this school, you will receive the elegant 48 page catalogue, copy of guaranty to return money in case of dissatisfaction given each accepted pupil, and newspaper and magazine accounts of how graduates of this school broke all records in expert shorthand work. If you are a stenographer, state system and experience. Address Success Shorthand School, Suite 1810, 79 Clark Street, Chicago, Ill.

November is football time. That's why we have planned to give you TWO CLEVER FOOTBALL YARNS next month. Don't miss them.

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Monthly Publication Issued by STREET & SMITH, 79-89 Seventh Avenue, New York

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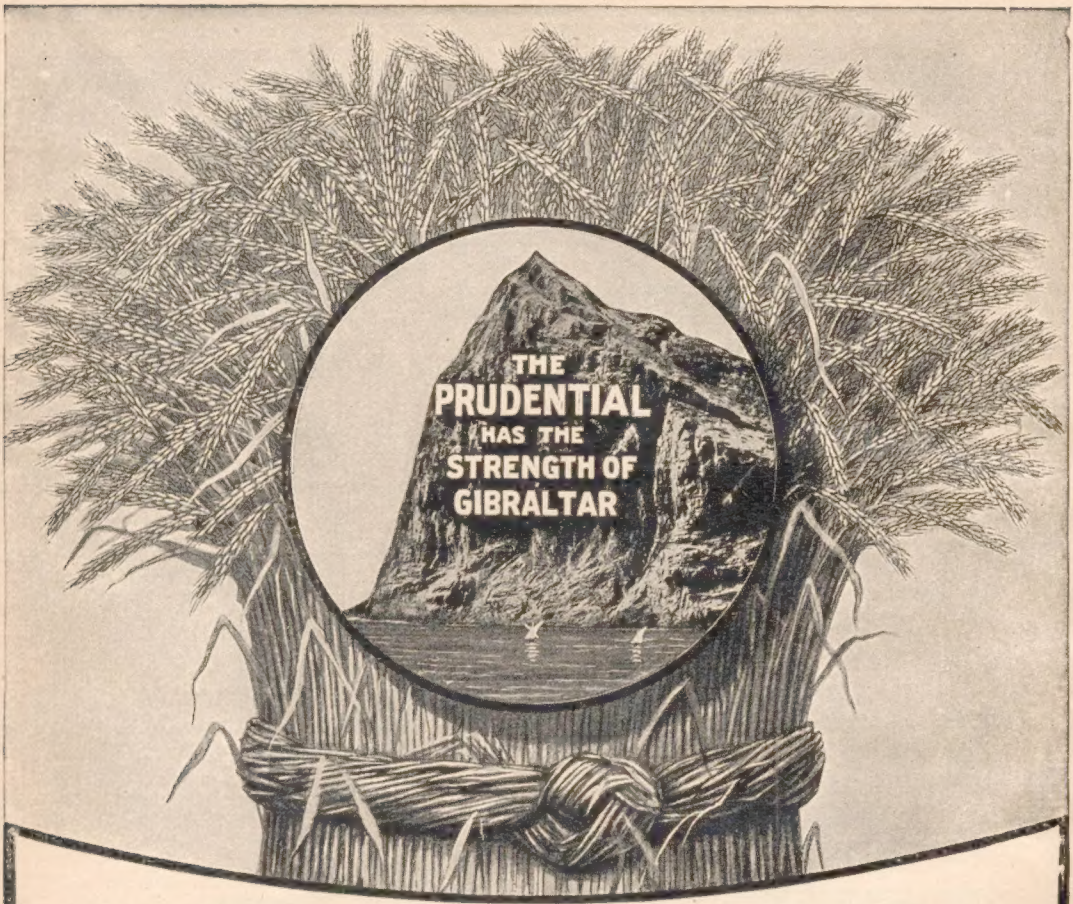

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Incorporated as a Stock Company by the State of New Jersey

JOHN F. DRYDEN, President

Home Office, NEWARK, N. J.

THE POPULAR MAGAZINE

VOL. VI. OCTOBER, 1906. No. 6.

The Fortunes of Geoff

By K. and Hesketh Prichard

Authors of "Don Q.," "Roving Hearts," Etc.

We want to direct special attention to this series. We think you will agree that it must take rank with the very best in magazine literature. The authors set a high standard in their widely read "Don Q." stories, but in Geoffrey Heronhaye you will find an even more entertaining character. Geoff is a young Oxford man who leaves England under a cloud and begins life anew among wilder peoples in the outposts of the world's civilization. Each story is complete in itself and is of the strong, adventure type.

I.—HOW HE EARNED HIS FIRST WAGES

(*A Complete Story*)

GEOFF was sick and tired of life. The raw tenor of his late existence in a Patagonian coast settlement had eaten into his heart. He was in his most reckless mood; though, to tell the truth, he was reckless enough at any time. His recklessness, coupled with his pride, had been responsible for his turning his back upon England and flinging himself into that wilder life where man lives for and by his own hand, and where at most seasons death stands beside him.

How Geoffrey Heronhaye, Oxford man, heir to broad estates, athlete and sportsman, came to be in Patagonia, down to his last dollar, is a long story which will not bear the telling here. Geoff was under a cloud in England. His relatives there seldom mentioned his name. Geoff might have explained, but he did not. There was a girl in New York—Gabrielle Van Rooven, an artist who liked men who worked for their living. Geoff had determined to work for his living—somehow. He hoped to see the girl again some time. And he had come to Patagonia, first, because it was one of the few places in the world he had never visited, and, second, because Geoff generally did the unexpected thing.

Now, it must be premised that he was very new to the life he had chosen, and on this particular day had come to his last dollar. The sky in the west was heaping up for storm as he sat on the flat stone which formed the chief furniture of his camp, and gave himself to consideration of the prospect.

His chin was thrust deep into his palm, his eyes, gray-green under knitted brows, looked out across the river with an intensity of vision that showed him an aspect of the world of which he had never before been conscious.

In person he was tall, dark, and open-

eyed, with well-cut lips that emphasized a character strong for good or evil. He was a young man inclined to be hard on himself, yet soft where a woman he liked was concerned. In all his twenty-two years he had never worked that he might live. Given health and strength, he had imagined himself equipped for the reincarnation of his choice; now that the hour of test had come, he was disillusioned.

As he sat there in the eye of the south wind, he drew from his pocket his last silver dollar, looked at it, and laughed with the bitter laugh of a man jeering at himself.

The strong chin settled more heavily, and the strange eyes roved farther and farther, as in spirit their owner passed away from Patagonia and from the turbid river of the Santa Cruz, and before him rose instead the mellow-red wings of his old home, brooding as it had brooded for centuries from its vantage of stoned and flowered terraces over the heavy, summer-wet Herefordshire meadows.

He heard once more the Yattalis church-bells announcing peace over the wise, tame land. Then with another laugh he dropped the coin back into his pocket, and as he did so touched a little, worn volume which lay there.

"An old friend who still remains—poor old Longfellow," he said, then repeated:

> "And the fierce Kabibonokka
> To the lodge came wild and wailing,
> Heaped the snow in drifts about it——

"Looks uncommonly like it now." He peered out into the heavy west, and then, lighting his pipe with a burning stick, he continued to talk aloud. "The Honorable Geoffrey Heronhaye, of Eton, Oxford, sometime heir of Yattalis, Herefordshire, died March 10, 1890. Geoff, the no-good Britisher, aspirant for the post of shepherd, peon, any mortal form of work on the estancia of some infernal Patagonian farmer, born March 11, 1890."

His face expressed a world of disgust, determination, and a devil-may-care self-reliance. Here was the face of a man who had lost many things, a man of memories, who tried not to think; a man of fair scholarship, who hid all signs of it, and who was poet enough to be able to appreciate poetry, which means far more than it seems to mean.

He stood up and stretched himself, kicked the fire into a blaze, and took stock of his belongings.

"At this moment I possess a suit of clothes, a poncho, and a rifle; enough food for a meal or two, a dollar in my pocket—and that's about the tally of it."

For the past week Geoffrey Heronhaye—"Geoff, the no-good Britisher," as he had dubbed himself—had camped upon the banks of the Santa Cruz River, since he could no longer afford the hospitality of the neighboring *boliche;* but daily he had hired a horse from the keeper of the wine-shop and ridden round the country knocking at many lonely doors. These doors, reluctantly opened, had disclosed to his eyes a type of individual with which up till then he had had few dealings.

He used to watch with a weary amusement for the change of manner that always came when he broached the nature of his errand. The bowing creature in the doorway usually judged him upon first appearance to be a rich Englishman, but as soon as he explained that he wanted work, he met with a remarkable variety of minor insult.

At one estancia, whose patron had been most obsequious through the first moments of the interview, he was asked for his character and his discharge, at which Geoff laughed, and ingenuously confessed that hitherto he had never earned his tea and flour by the sweat of his brow.

At another, the Argentine owner went so far as to say that he might sleep in the cook-house and get his experience if he would pay for his food.

At yet a third, he had been informed that the estancia was not run as a charity institution for the salvage of no-good loafers—this was at the farm of a Scotchman. Geoff mentioned that he was not a loafer, but ready to work.

"What can ye do?" asked the Scotchman. "Ye can talk Greek and Latin?"

"Badly, I'm afraid."

The Scotchman nodded contemptuously, as if this was no more than he expected.

"I ken fine what ye can do," he went on, with rough contempt; "ye can shoot pheasants, and play cricket, maybe! Shough! and you a man grown, six foot in yer socks! What's the good of you?"

"I can ride a bit," suggested Geoff, between his teeth, for he was not in an amiable temper, and the truth is frequently insulting.

"Yes, to hounds! Not what they call *riding* in this country—mind you that! What else can you do?"

"I can hit most things with a rifle, and I can take care of myself with my hands," replied Geoff, as temperately as he could, for he dimly realized that this man as a possible employer had every right to make such inquiries.

"Gran' accomplishments!" sneered the other. "Off wi' ye. Ye're no use to me or to yersel'." And the door was clapped in his face.

So night after night had Geoff come back to this camp beside the bleak, tidal river, and to the more vivid realization of the fact that he lay at the mercy of life. Even the inalienable stamp of class hindered his chances of success.

The persistent leaden failure wore down Geoff's once large stock of buoyancy, until upon this evening, when the gray river, flooded with rain, ran gulping and moaning between its banks, something like desperation began to dominate his mood.

As the dark fell he looked round his camp with the bitter feeling of dislike that a place where one has been unlucky always arouses, and as he watched the small flames creep and crackle timidly in the wet wood, it came to him that the country was accursed; the river took shape and menaced him like a malignant human presence with its iteration of peevish noises.

He stood up impatiently; the place had become unendurable, he would go thence and trek out into the wilderness toward the distant cordillera of the west, to see if he could wring from nature that succor which humanity refused.

The act of breaking camp did not occupy him long, and in five minutes he had turned his back upon the river. Without looking round he passed over the high ridge, and, taking a rough direction from the stars, which made a pale luminance in the sky, set forth upon his journey toward the empty wastes of pampas.

II.

Into his wanderings for the next six days it would be tedious to enter. On the second day he spent his last dollar for a little food, and left the last habitation behind. Late on the fifth he killed a guanaco buck, the firing of the shot forming his first action in the new era of self-support. That night he camped by the body, though it still wanted an hour to sunset.

At this juncture his future plans merely included a vague and not unromantic idea of traveling on until he found some camp of Indians, who, he thought, would permit him a place by their fires in return for his skill with the rifle. And he was mentally rehearsing something of what might pass at that future meeting, when a man mounted on a yellow horse and driving two others before him suddenly rose over the rim of the nearest ridge.

The Geoffrey Heronhaye of a week before would have gone forward, not without hope, to meet this visitor, but already the quiescence, the reticence of the wilderness had begun to sink into his receptive soul. So he sat on by his fire, boiling water in a meat-tin, until roused by a call from the stranger, who had ridden up quite close, but who, Patagonian fashion, would not dismount without an invitation.

"Hola," said the man.

"Hulloa!" returned Geoff, with the racial difference of intonation.

The newcomer was strong and thickset, a red, Indian poncho hung from his shoulders, and out of the hole in the

center of it rose a short-necked head, grotesquely bushed with a blackness of hair and beard.

"Won't you dismount?" said Geoff, forced to make the first advance.

"I don't mind if I do," replied the man, casting a glance at the meat-tin in which the water was boiling. "Have you no yerba?"

"No, I'm sorry I haven't."

The horseman picketed out his animals, off-saddled, drew from his *maletas* a bag of yerba, also a cup formed of a northern wood, and a bombilla of tin, for the making and the drinking of the maté. Then, without further speech, he brewed the national Patagonian drink, and drew a little through the tube, or bombilla, which is common to all who partake, and passed it on to Geoff, who by this time had rubbed off some of his old-time fastidiousness. As he watched his companion swallowing the liquid, the Argentine remarked with a sort of smothered fury:

"This is the devil's country!"

"Quite so," agreed Geoff, and waited for more.

"Where is your estancia?"

"This is my estancia," replied Geoff whimsically, pointing to the fire.

The Argentine considered his companion's grim face thoughtfully. "I suppose you don't want work," at last he said. "Yes," he went on, still keenly looking at the other, "I said work. Though there's risk in it, there's money, too, and one white man should help another in this devil's country."

"If you would be more explicit," said Geoff, with exaggerated indifference, "we should get along much faster."

"Curse me!" said the Argentine, "I like your cut, and I believe you can help me. Three days ago I was coming south with sixty horses, when my camp was raided by Delirez."

"What? Delirez, the horse-thief?" asked Geoff, full of interest. "People said he was stealing horses on the Rio Negro last week."

"I wish he was. But, as a matter of fact, he attacked my camp last night, he and another, and an Indian boy along with them. All that I saved out of my lot were these three. Come, will you help me to get those horses back?" The Argentine's eyes were burning with excitement as he leaned forward.

Geoff reflected. He was at the end of his tether, and here was a desperate man, with a desperate game to propose—why should he not take a hand in it? The Argentine looked a rough customer, but Geoff told himself he had not gone to Patagonia to choose his company.

"I don't care if I do," he said aloud. "But what are you going to pay me?"

"You shall be my paid *compañero*," replied the Argentine eagerly. "I'll give you a horse for every week you're with me, and if we succeed, I'll throw in the *alazán* mare and her foal, that are the pick of the *tropilla* these ladrones have taken off. There will be plenty of risk in it, and some fighting, too," he added, as if he knew these facts might appeal to the mood of the young man before him. "Now, come, what do you say?"

"I say, done!" answered Geoff, and so the bargain was concluded.

III.

When Geoffrey Heronhaye lay down to sleep for the short two hours before the moon rose, it was with the satisfaction of an individual who had at length made his first step into a domain from which he had been long excluded.

For some time he lay watching the clouds racing before a wind which seemed to blow out the stars like lamps.

When he awoke, the moon had climbed out above the basaltic ridge under which he was sleeping. His newfound employer had already risen and was boiling the tea in a kettle.

From all around the camp came to him the unfamiliar noises of the Patagonian night, the barking of the hoary dog, the plash and cry of wild fowl, and the friendly sound of horses nuzzling and snorting in the dark.

"We will drink a cup of tea," said the Argentine, "and then we will ride

northwest until we come upon the trail of these ladrones. Is your rifle loaded?"

"Yes," said Geoff.

"You had better ride the black horse. These horse-thieves have three hounds, so that we shall find some difficulty in approaching their camp. They are desperate fellows, especially Delirez, a big man with a yellow beard, and one of the finest riders in this country. You may have to put the foresight of your rifle upon him before we are through with it. And now you had better tell me your name—mine is Omiro."

"And mine," said Heronhaye, "is Geoff."

"Then, Geoff," returned the Argentine, "saddle up the horses."

All that night they rode on an undiverted course through gray and waving seas of thorn and grass. The silence was broken only by an occasional curse from the Argentine, who rode ahead, accompanied by his ink-black shadow—gigantic, grotesque, like some pursuant demon suddenly risen from underground.

Far up in the sky, among pinnacles of jagged cloud, floated the southern moon, painting with sardonic humor a thousand fairy fancies upon the canvas of that dreary world.

No word passed between the two until, deep in the gut of a ravine, Omiro pointed to a broad track impressed by many hoofs upon the reed-grown fringe of a river, and, dropping to the ground, pronounced the trail not a day old.

For ten hours the Argentine and Geoff pressed forward across the pampas. On two occasions the trail was lost, but they rediscovered it, and at last their tired horses bore them up a long undulation, from the head of which they saw far away a pale smoke creeping up into the golden sunset sky. At once they camped well out of sight.

From a neighboring hill Geoff picked out the dispositions of the enemy with a Ross' telescope. Across the intervening miles he descried Delirez, sitting large and bearded, by the camp-fire; saw another of the thieves cutting wood, and finally the Indian boy returning with the three hounds, and, slung across his saddle, one of those small ostriches that have received their name from Darwin. Then, warmed by a curious sense of delight in his proprietorship, he made out the *alazán* mare and foal which were to be his if all went well.

It was a new sensation for Geoff to count upon the wages of effort. Hitherto the effort alone had been the point of interest, but now he was possessed of an almost childish eagerness to obtain the reward of his labor, to touch for the first time in his life a return for the outlay of his physical powers.

Omiro listened attentively to the various details told him by Geoff.

"So they have tied up two horses for the night? If we can cut those free we shall have the men at our mercy," he commented. "Now, heed me, this is my plan. In the darkest hour of the night we will creep down, and, while you cover the camp with your rifle, I will crawl in and cut away the two picketed horses. Riding on one of these, I shall be able without any difficulty to drive off the remainder. Do you understand?"

"Yes, I understand, but what of the men? Had we not better make a clean job of it, and capture the thieves as well?"

"My friend," replied Omiro, "it is plain you have little experience of the pampas. If we can only succeed in capturing their horses, the thieves will be entirely at our mercy, and I can make what terms I like with them later, when they have had time to recognize their position. Did they not tell you in Santa Cruz that there is a price on the head of Delirez? However, whether we fail or succeed, you and I will have a rendezvous in this camp when the business is over."

"All right."

"There is one thing in our favor," went on Omiro. "You say the Indian boy has killed an ostrich. That means the hounds will be gorged, and so will sleep more heavily. San Pedro grant it to be so! For if the dogs should

give the alarm, there will be blood spilled upon the pampas before the morning."

All this time Geoff was studying his companion, the man who was at home in these great wastes—studying him as one studies the comrade to whom may fall the guarding of his back in a vital struggle. But, truth to tell, Geoff observed to little purpose.

The previous careers of the two men, their very conception of life, were so different, so congenitally opposed, that it is small wonder the acquaintance of a day left either blind to the personality of the other.

So they sat beside a fire cunningly constructed by Omiro into practically smokeless existence, and waited for the moment of action, without words, without exchange of thought, until a background of darkness made it possible for them to bask in a warmer flame by which they slept in turns, until the dead hour arrived when even the foxes ceased their noisy quest after sustenance.

Then the two of them stole away upon their horses, far through the river valley, until they descried the sullen fire of Delirez smoldering its short life into nothingness.

Here they dismounted. While on a horse Omiro was Geoff's superior, for the man was one of those extraordinary riders only to be found in countries where the horse forms an integral part of human existence; but upon the ground Geoff, who had crept through the corries of the Black Mountain, and through the elk forests of Norway, became at once the more active partner. And wild, indeed, was his mood, for here before him were horse-thieves, men who in such a land are outside the pale; and it must be owned he was somewhat influenced by an eager desire to earn and handle his first wages.

IV.

The plan of attack was simple. They were to crawl within a hundred yards of the camp. It was to be Omiro's part to cut the ropes of the picketed horses, because the animals knew him, and if during this perilous phase of the affair an alarm should be given by man or dog, Geoff was to hold up the camp at the point of his rifle.

With a muttered "In an hour," Omiro left the side of his companion. Almost at once he passed beyond even the keen sight of Geoff; he seemed to melt into the darkness without a sound.

Then Geoff himself crawled nearer to the sleeping men. Beyond them the picketed horses were dimly to be guessed at, thicker clots in the gloom—no more.

Only once, as he crouched behind a bush, did his senses give him news of what was passing in the night; he heard the snort of a horse, the thin cadence of its indrawn breath before it neighed, and he could have sworn he saw the dark hand of the Argentine pinch the neigh from its nostrils, followed by the soft shuffle of a horse's walk.

Suddenly an incredible din arose in the blackness. The hounds gave tongue, the whole pampas seemed to ring with voices, through which Geoff could distinguish the bellow of the yellow-bearded man searching for his rifle and calling out that a "lion" (puma) had stampeded the horses.

In an instant the Indian boy flung upon the fire an armful of dead thorn, lighting up the happenings in the camp. Geoff saw Delirez kneeling upon one knee, ramming home the bolt of his rifle; the hounds a few yards beyond spitting and yelping at an indistinct figure stooping with the gleam of a knife over the picketing ropes. So for a moment the picture stood out, vividly lit by the flare. At last Delirez forced home the bolt of his rifle, and, locking it to his shoulder, covered Omiro.

Geoff was ready. One of the accomplishments with which his former life had endowed him was the power of straight shooting. The man before him was not only a notorious horse-thief defending stolen property with lead and gunpowder, but, further, had been convicted of more than one murder. His attitude, cheek to gun-stock,

surely demanded retaliation in kind, but Geoff could not kill him thus. Instead, he threw his rifle forward, and fired at the weapon in the other man's hands.

The bullet struck the rifle from the grasp of Delirez, and in the same second, with a crash of hoofs, Omiro vanished into the night.

Geoff lost no time, but quickly made his way back into an area of low thicket that stretched behind him. There he lay for some minutes before he ventured to look out. The enormous fire was still leaping and crackling, but the human beings who had lighted it were nowhere to be seen.

Fearing another shot, they had sought cover in the darkness, and lay, no doubt, with their rifles ready should the attacking party be so unwise as to enter the flame-lit circle of the camp.

Geoff waited for fully half an hour, but nothing occurred. He saw nothing, he heard nothing. Then, bethinking him of his rendezvous with his partner at their own camp, he began to move at the appointed time, and was soon striding away through the night.

He reached his camp when the air was full of dawn. It was that colorless hour when the young day is born and lies lightly asleep among the dews. Omiro had not returned.

The camp-fire was long cold, and Geoff, not wishing to betray his presence to the horse-thieves, dared only to rekindle an ember or two to boil Omiro's kettle. As he sat drinking a cup of tea—not forgetting to keep one hot for his comrade's return—the wind of the night lulled away, a thin shower fell, and the sun rose.

Geoff climbed a neighboring knoll and surveyed the expanses of the pampas. The country was empty, save for a long trail of smoke which still curled up from the camp of the horse-thieves.

There was absolutely nothing for Geoff to do but to watch and wait; sometimes on the knoll with its aching iteration of view; sometimes among the small details of the camp. His sense of helplessness galled him increasingly as his fears of disaster grew with the passing hours.

V.

Sunset was not far off. An evening wind had arisen that blew with a strain of acute sadness through the dry shrubs and grasses. On one side of the camp lay boulders, heavy, basaltic fragments, which formed the only cover by means of which the place could be approached and surprised. On these Geoff had hitherto kept a constant watch, but, as he sat humped and brooding beside his fire, the fatigues of the past hours began to tell upon him, and he became a little sleepy.

Now, about this time a man with a big yellow beard, and wearing a poncho belted round his middle, and carrying a rifle, crawled from the base of a ridge in the rear of these boulders, and began to creep stealthily toward the camp.

Once or twice he paused in his murderous approach, as if gaging the distance between himself and the dozing figure at the fire, but both times Geoff's attitude proclaimed so clearly the depth of sleep or reverie to which he had sunk that his enemy in the poncho gave up his first intention of firing a long shot, and came on, creeping closer and closer.

As for Geoff, tired with his long exertions, his head was nodding forward wearily, when one of those small, accidental warnings came to him which led the earlier races of the world to believe in local gods of ravine and torrent.

A red-breasted Patagonian snipe flew high above him uttering its shrill note. The sound, recalling many memories, roused him, and not an instant too soon, for, glancing up, his quick eye caught sight of some object that might have been the toe of a man's boot just disappearing behind the boulders, and, as Geoff dived for the cover of the adjacent bushes, a bullet passed with a long-drawn whine upon its course down the *cañadon*.

The place where Geoff had thrown himself down for shelter was in another part of the same outcrop of broken basaltic rocks as held his enemy, and the two were so close that a whisper could have been heard from one to the

other. For chance had granted to Geoff what the foe he could not see had gained by design—safe hiding at the base of a boulder.

So he lay for awhile listening to the slight movements of the man whom he concluded to be Delirez, but as the moments gathered toward half an hour, Geoff began to hope that his assailant was lone-handed. With this idea he turned a free mind toward outwitting him.

Only one plan commended itself to his judgment; first he pulled off his coat and wrapped it round a stone, then, making a head with another stone, he placed his hat upon it, and propped the effigy of himself in a likely-looking crevice.

Some fifty yards farther up the *cañadon* a small stream had hollowed a pathway for itself under the wall of cliff. Toward this Geoff commenced to make careful and silent progress. Here and there, as he was obliged to creep over more open ground, he felt that at any second a bullet might cut short his career.

None came. Yet it was with a feeling of relief that he slipped down behind the sheltering banks of the stream. His intention, which he executed with all speed, was to make a détour and come out over the high *barranca* in a position that would command the group of boulders in which his foe was lurking.

A quarter of an hour brought him up among the windy tussocks that overhung the edge of the *barranca*. With infinite precaution he looked down through their wiry stems and perceived beneath him the big, yellow-bearded figure that he had expected to see.

Geoff snuggled closer among the grasses and waited, thanking his stars for the good old days of deer-stalking in Scotland, which had given him a training likely to turn out the most valuable acquirement of his new life.

Delirez kept moving, and at last sighted the hat, and fired instantly.

"Hands up!" shouted Geoff.

Delirez dropped his weapon, stood as ordered, and raised his eye to the rifle-barrel above him with a face pale to fury under its sun-brown.

"Walk quite slowly out into the open by the *califaté* bushes until I come down," went on Geoff.

Delirez made no reply beyond carrying out the instructions given him, but he stared hard in open surprise at his captor as he descended the cliff.

Geoff picked up a hide *cabresto* (halter-rope), and secured the man's hands and ankles. "Lean up against that stone and answer me. You will find it worth your while to tell me what you have done with my *compañero?*"

At the sound of his voice the prisoner raised a queer, questioning look.

"What in mischief should I do with your *compañero?*" he asked.

"He would be here now but for you."

"Who is he?" said the other man impatiently.

"His name is Omiro, and you stole his *tropilla* of sixty horses a week ago."

"Is that so?" scoffed the horse-thief. "Describe him."

"It's hardly necessary, but as you will. Black, bushy hair and beard, the lobe of the left ear missing, wore a red Tehuelche poncho—but you know him," Geoff broke off.

"Jericho!" ejaculated the prisoner, and laughed unpleasantly. "And you?"

"I'm the one who helped him to get the horses back last night."

"Hanged if I didn't think so!" The man's expression was altering with every word. "Now, I'd like to hear if you know who I am?"

"I'm quite aware you are Delirez, the horse-thief."

An odd sound came from the other's throat. "Did you happen to hear that a proclamation had been issued for my arrest—and a reward offered?"

"I did."

"Well, you'll never touch that reward."

"We'll see," said Geoff grimly.

"Do you want it proved to you?"

"No hurry. You can prove it before the *comisario* in Gallegos."

"Shucks! do you want it proved?" repeated the prisoner sharply.

"If you insist."

"Put your hand in my left pocket and find a paper there. Read it."

Geoff did so, while Delirez watched him with a derisive smile. And Geoff read:

"Hoy, hoy, hoy! To any one giving information concerning the whereabouts of Gualtorio Delirez, whether dead or alive, will be given a reward of two thousand pesos by the governments of the provinces of Chubut, Santa Cruz, and Gallegos. Description: Delirez is black-haired and heavily bearded, the lobe of his left ear is missing . . ."

Geoff stopped short.

"Read far enough? Still thinking of taking me to Gallegos?" snapped his prisoner.

Geoff's dark face grew darker. He laid down his rifle and loosed the other man's bonds.

"It's your turn," he said. "Tie me up and take me before the *comisario*."

"I've no use for you," drawled the other insultingly, "but I'll just tell you who I am. I'm Adamson, the sheep-farmer from San Martin. As for you, I don't credit you with being a scoundrel. You're just a fool; a gull, who actually believed I had stolen Omiro's—isn't that the name he gave you?—*tropilla* of horses! You took in his story! Well, you've been the accomplice of the biggest horse-thief in America, and he's deserted you to die on the pampas! How he must have laughed at your aristocratic innocence!"

Geoff stood white and scowling. The shame of it struck him cold.

"I'm going to ask a favor of you," he said thickly.

"What? You've the right to, haven't you? Well?" sneered Adamson.

Geoff gripped himself.

"I may remind you that I have held you twice under my rifle in a dozen hours," he said; and as Adamson nodded, he added: "Just keep my share in last night's work to yourself for awhile—you may not lose by it."

Adamson met his gloomy eyes, but he answered nothing, and, picking up his rifle, walked away.

It was with a bitter heart that Geoff turned back to his camp, and, as he gathered together the scanty equipment there, he lifted his face to the gray sky and burst into a fit of fierce and cheerless laughter, for it occurred to him that the yerba, the battered kettle, and the flour which Delirez had left behind him in his flight were the wages of his first endeavor toward self-support.

FOLLOWING IN FATHER'S FOOTSTEPS

A NEW YORK editor tells a quaintly funny story, in which his little son plays the leading rôle.

He lives in a Long Island suburb where the mud in the roads stands almost as high as the local rates, and it was while pensively staring at the slushy sediment outside the window one rainy day that he grew reminiscent, and laughingly related a story to a number of guests of how, early in his journalistic career, he was carried off his feet when at a crowded outdoor meeting, and rolled in the thickest mud that he ever remembered seeing.

After which he went on to minutely describe his condition following on the operation, much to the intense amusement of his listeners.

While he was speaking his little boy had slipped off his chair and gone stealthily out of the room.

Two minutes afterward the door of the room opened slowly, and an apparition appeared that looked like a perambulating mud-heap.

And from out of this miniature monument of mud and filth issued a small, querulous voice.

"Daddy," it piped, "did you look like this when you was rolled in the mud?"

It Pays to Advertise

By George Edwin Hunt

Author of "A Bucolic Confidence Game," "The Capitulation of Captain Gethro," Etc.

The humors of a country newspaper office are delightfully emphasized in Mr. Hunt's amusing story. Two rival editors of the quick-to-speak-slow-to-act variety supply the entertainment. Mr. Hunt is a born humorist and his fun is irresistible

"NOW this, I take it," said Uncle Henry—"this is the most powerful editorial that has been written yet. Listen to this, John."

Uncle Henry had been discoursing all evening on the relative merits of the editors of the Booneburg *Palladium* and the Booneburg *Clarion*. It seems there was a distinct difference of opinion between the two gentlemen, and they were saying harsh things about each other in their editorial columns. Uncle Henry cleared his throat with a ponderous "A-a-hem!" adjusted his steel-bowed spectacles, flicked the paper with his fingers to make it behave, and read in a loud, declamatory voice:

"The pusillanimous upstart at present engaged in forcing his blackguardly opinions on this fair community through the medium of his sordid, vilely edited sheet, the *Clarion*, claims that credit for whitewashing the erstwhile defiled walls of the county jail is due the Democratic sheriff, Jim Baxter, commonly known as 'Tin-Horn Jim.' Where, we ask this effete spawn of a degenerate party, where would the hireling sheriff have come out in this whitewashing business if a broad-minded Republican county council had not authorized the spending of the money? We pause for a reply. Can the mutton-headed imbecile imposing on this prosperous community as a man of intelligence answer? We trow not."

I had only reached Booneburg that afternoon. Four years of a night-and-day application to a brokerage business in New York had put me in a condition where I had difficulty in distinguishing between fifty-six and seven-eighths and a bale of hay.

My doctor told me I needed rest and quiet. He said: "Go out in the country and get kicked by a cow."

I immediately thought of Uncle Henry and Aunt Eliza, out in Booneburg, Indiana. I was not sure they could qualify on the cow proposition, but my recollections of Booneburg led me to believe they would be strong on the rest-and-quiet end of the game. And now, it seemed, I had only exchanged the disturbing fifty-six and seven-eighths for an equally agitating strenuous political contest.

"Ah!" commented Uncle Henry, "there *is* an editorial! *That* will give the *Clarion* something to think about! This controversy, my dear John—this controversy will attract the attention of the galaxy of States!"

Uncle Henry combed his chin-whiskers from underneath with his fingers, a sure sign he was pleased with himself. Aunt Eliza laid down the sock she was darning and gazed at him in fond admiration.

Uncle Henry pounded the table with his fist. "Where is the boasted freedom of our national institutions, where is the liberty of conscience and protection in the pursuit of happiness guaranteed us by the Constitution, if a hireling sheriff is permitted to filch the honors of a benignant county council? Where?"

And Uncle Henry waved his spec-

tacles triumphantly, while Aunt Eliza solemnly nodded her approval as she resumed her sock-darning.

In the early part of the evening I had expressed a desire to know what it was all about. Two hours later I was firmly convinced that my innocent inquiry had been injudicious. Uncle Henry elucidated copiously. It was one of the most elaborate explanations I ever sat through. He positively left nothing to be inferred. Reduced to an elemental state, it ran as follows:

Demorep County was about evenly divided politically, the balance of power resting in the hands of a few independent voters. As a result, it was not unusual for the two great parties to alternate in electing their candidates, or a split-ticket being elected.

At the last election the Democrats had succeeded in gaining most of the county offices, but the commissioners and county council were Republican. The opportunity to claim credit for all that was good, and side-step blame for all that was bad in the management of county affairs, was irresistible.

The Democratic *Clarion* and the Republican *Palladium* had been at it for months. At the close of the explanation I was almost in a comatose condition, and Uncle Henry was visibly exhausted. Had it lasted another half-hour, I am sure he would have split the table-top with his fist. As it was, several parts came unglued. But I had heard all the details of the controversy.

I will always think well of Aunt Eliza. She was certainly very good to me. She let me sleep until eight o'clock the following morning, a privilege only accorded sick people and inebriates in Booneburg.

In New York my breakfast consisted of half a roll, a cup of coffee, and a kind word, if the waiter was in a benignant mood. The fact that I consumed a fair supply of bacon and eggs, several rolls, some sirloin steak, and two cups of coffee at that first breakfast in Booneburg led me to believe I was in imminent danger of a rapid recovery from seven-eighths-itis.

After breakfast Aunt Eliza gave me elaborate directions for finding Uncle Henry's store, the largest department-store in Booneburg. You went four blocks down High Street to the public square, turned to the left at the post-office corner, walked one block, and there you were. At her urgent solicitation, I promised on my honor as a broker and a gentleman not to get lost, and set off down the elm-shaded brick sidewalk.

I reached the public square in absolute safety, and was considering the advisability of sending back a message to relieve any anxiety Aunt Eliza might be feeling, when my attention was attracted to a ground-floor office by an infernal clamor and racket from within.

If a sign over the door was to be believed, it was the office of the Booneburg *Palladium*. I had scarcely time to note this, when a short, slender fellow shot precipitately out of the door, hurling defiance and swear words at some party unknown within the office.

His excitement and haste were such that he bolted into me with considerable force. To preserve my equilibrium, I threw my arms about him. He evidently jumped to the conclusion it was an unexpected and diabolical device on the part of the gentleman in the office to accomplish his undoing, and before I could say a word I was wrestling madly over the sidewalk with a perfect stranger.

In the meantime, the party in the *Palladium* office was swearing steadily and consistently, and enumerating the different things that would happen to my antagonist if he "ever put his red-headed, freckle-faced, spindle-shanked" self within the portals of that room again.

I wish I might have given more attention to his flow of language. It was such an artistic, such a finished bit of "cussing out," I should have enjoyed it had I had more leisure. But I was busy.

The persistency with which that red-headed little chap hustled me around irritated me, and I determined to rub his head on the sidewalk if the police

did not interfere and my wind held out.

He was a wiry customer and a good wrestler for his weight. Suddenly shifting his hold, he used his right knee and hip in a familiar manner. I devised that throw myself, and in a flash memory carried me back to the college gymnasium, five years before.

"Jimmy Peters, you little devil!" I gasped. "What in thunder are you trying to do?"

We backed off and surveyed each other. Neither had been much improved by the encounter. Jimmy's face was as red as his hair, his necktie was around under his left ear, and his coat bunched up about his neck. And I have reason to believe my own attire was somewhat disheveled. In fact, one of the first things I did was to tuck in my shirt.

"John!" panted Jimmy, in amazement, "John Marsh! What in thunder are *you* trying to do, assaulting peaceable citizens on the public thoroughfare? You're a sight!" And the well-remembered, infectious grin suddenly spread over the freckled, good-humored face as the absurdity of the situation dawned on him. "In another minute, John, I would have been pounding the back of your beloved head on one of these hard, coarse bricks until you hollered 'nuff."

"Get out, you miserable midget!" I replied indignantly. "I was just exercising in a mild way. I hadn't really started yet."

We picked up our hats and adjusted our clothing. There was a crowd about us, of course. Even in Booneburg two gentlemen may not clasp each other and gyrate madly over the sidewalk without arousing a passing interest in the public mind.

Jimmy explained I was a college fraternity brother of his. He said the oath of the fraternity compelled any two brothers meeting after five years of separation to greet as we had just done. As I listened to him I remembered that even in college Jimmy had all the earmarks of a confidence man.

Jimmy suggested we go to his office and talk. Crossing the square, we entered the Booneburg *Clarion* building, where he led me to his private room. In silence and with due solemnity he locked the door, produced a bottle of whisky, a jug of water, two glasses, two pipes, some tobacco, and a box of matches. When we were comfortable, I in the office-chair and Jimmy on the desk, I said:

"All right. Let's hear about it. What are you doing here, and who was the energetic party that was devoting such thoughtful and painstaking efforts to stating his opinion of you?"

"Me?" said Jimmy, ungrammatical but bland. "Oh, I'm editor of the *Clarion*. I own it."

"And the gentleman with the vocabulary?" I insisted.

"Bob Needham."

"Bob Needham!" I shouted. "What's he doing here?"

"Editing the *Palladium*," replied Jimmy placidly.

"Have you and Bobby quarreled?" I asked, in astonishment. "Peters and Needham, the David and Jonathan of the class!"

Jimmy nodded vigorously. "Gimme a match."

I struck a match, relit my own pipe, and passed the box to Peters. We sat silent for a moment, Jimmy smoking like a freckle-faced Vesuvius.

"What's the row about?" I asked.

Jimmy leaned over and answered in a tragically low tone of voice: "I've found him out at last. He's a *Republican!*"

Nothing could have added to the damaging impression made on me by this remarkable assertion. It was as though he had convicted Bob of bigamy or of being a trust. Jimmy leaned back against the wall with an air of finality.

The inference that Bob was disgraced beyond all hope of pardon was so evident that I wagged my head sorrowfully and looked the pity I thought I felt.

"Match me," requested Jimmy.

We both relit our neglected pipes.

"You were over to see him about the

editorial in yesterday's *Palladium?*" I asked.

Jimmy clasped his knee with his hands as he gravely nodded assent.

"Did he apologize?"

"I hardly think so," replied Jimmy. "I missed some of his conversation after I met you, but it did not sound to me like an apology."

I agreed with him.

Another silence while I pondered.

"Match," from Jimmy, laconically.

I handed him one, and struck one for myself. It looked like the Match Trust might do well, anyhow.

"How long have you been here?" I asked.

"Since last January," Jimmy replied. "Do you remember the wreck of the limited on the A. B. & C. last November? Thirty-eight killed. I was on the Chicago *Star-World* then, and was sent out to cover the story. I was here several days, and had a chance to size up the newspaper situation. The *Clarion* was owned and edited by an old moss-back without brains enough to recognize his opportunity. The paper was so awful nobody would read it, and his circulation was so bad nobody wanted to advertise in it. Nothing but the county printing and job work kept him from starving to death. I dickered with him and got it pretty cheap."

"How are you getting on?"

"Fine," said Jimmy. "We had two hundred and fifty subscribers and five columns of advertising, mostly payable in cordwood and potatoes, when Bob—when I bought the paper," he corrected himself hastily, "and I now carry from twelve to fourteen columns of ads, all paid for in cash at three times the old rate. Incidentally, I have every taxpayer in Demorep County on my subscription list except old man Barnstable, over on Plum Creek, and he can't read."

"And how is Bob getting along with the *Palladium?*" I asked.

Jimmy gave me a quick, furtive glance before he answered.

"Oh, all right. He bought a dead one, too, when he bought the *Palladium,* but the newspaper business has been looking up lately. I guess Bob's subscription list is as long as mine. I know he carries practically the same amount of ads and gets the same rates."

"And do you write editorials of the same forceful and vigorous character as those written by Bobby?"

Jimmy handed me a galley-proof from his desk.

It read as follows:

The impotent ravings of the hen-headed idiot posing as an editor—editor, forsooth!—of the *Palladium* would be amusing were it not for the pity their imbecility naturally generates in the minds of his readers. He is now claiming that credit for whitewashing the county jail is due the county council. What rot! What insufferable, ill-begotten tommy-rot! The idea emanated from the massive brain of our gentlemanly sheriff, Mr. John James Baxter, than whom a nobler man n'er served a sovereign people. It met with such instantaneous, such unanimous approval from pulpit, press, and public that a corrupt and degraded majority in the county council was COMPELLED to heed the voice of the people and favor the appropriation. The friends of the editor of the *Palladium,* assuming that he has any, should trephine his cranium, extract the cotton-waste he is using for brains, and replace it with asbestos fiber. THE LATTER DOES NOT DETERIORATE SO RAPIDLY.

I handed the sheet back without comment. It struck me that comment was unnecessary.

In our subsequent conversation, Jimmy, with much detail, acquainted me with the story of his past five years. I began to think this detail habit was due to Booneburg air.

On leaving college he and Needham became reporters on the *Star-World.* Here they learned the news-gathering end of newspaper work. Their aptitude and industry secured advancement for them, and, after a time, Jimmy became editorial paragraph-writer, and Bob was made telegraph editor.

Then came the wreck on the A. B. & C. Jimmy had a deserved reputation for the brilliancy of his stories and was given the assignment. He saw the opportunity for a good live paper at Booneburg, and with the promptitude of genius, borrowed some money from his father, added to it some of his own, and bought the *Clarion* within a month.

A few weeks later, Needham, who

was aware of the Booneburg situation through his association with Peters, suddenly appeared as owner and editor of the *Palladium*.

Jimmy led me to infer he resented that Bob should have used knowledge obtained in confidence, to become a rival editor. He did not say so in so many words, but I got that impression from his story. The political situation also contributing, the relations between them had been strained to the breaking-point.

As I left the *Clarion* office I said: "Jimmy, I am going over to see Bob this afternoon."

"All right," responded Jimmy cheerfully. "Tell him for me if I ever get a good chance I'll bounce a brick off that wooden head of his."

When I stepped into the editorial sanctum of the *Palladium* later in the day, big, blue-eyed, broad-shouldered Bob was busily scissoring copy from an Indianapolis paper.

"Can you direct me to Mr. Robert Brinsley Needham?" I asked.

Bobby whirled around in his office-chair, gave a wild whoop of delight, and grasped me by both hands. After the inevitable preliminary explanations, I said:

"Bob, I spent the morning with Jimmy Peters."

Needham's face grew stern and set.

"The freckle-faced Irish molecule," he commented. "One of these days I'll breathe on him real hard, and blow him over into Jason County."

"What's the trouble between you?" I asked.

"Come close," said Bob, lowering his voice almost to a whisper. "I'll tell you. He's a *Democrat!*"

Now, I had had a chance to think over Jim's fearful indictment of Bob, and I was not in a mood to be buncoed twice in one day by an impressive manner and a low tone of voice. I could not see it was such a blamed serious crime, anyhow; so I spoke up smartly:

"Well, what of it?"

"What of it!" Bob shouted. "Do you sit there and calmly ask me what of it? Why, John, don't you know——" and Bobby paced the office floor, delivering an oration in which "grand old party," "Constitution follows the flag," "our princely possessions in the Philippines," and sundry allusions to George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, and Theodore Roosevelt bombarded "free silver heresy," "party of disorganization," "Bryanism," and "negro disfranchisement."

It was a pretty good stump speech, and when the last verbal Roman candle had burst, and the last rhetorical sky-rocket had faded away, I concluded there was no use arguing with him. He impressed me as being fuller of partizan spirit than an office-holder. I dropped Jimmy, conversationally, and led the talk to college days. Before I left him I said:

"Bob, I expect to be in Booneburg a week or so, and I want my relations with Jimmy and you to be well-defined. Your quarrels must not affect my friendship for either of you, and I expect to meet you both on the same old footing."

"Sure," responded Bob cordially. "Certainly, old man. Couldn't think of anything else as far as I am concerned. But I say, John, next time you see that little wart-on-a-pickle you tell him I'm going to throw a cup of water on him some time and drown him."

After supper Uncle Henry read Jimmy's editorial and waxed indignant. Uncle Henry is a little choleric at times. He laid down the paper, and what he said regarding the reputation, ability, personal appearance, and editorial merit of Mr. James Alison Peters in the next few minutes certainly covered the ground.

In his wrath and excitement he finally swore, "By Judas!" and Aunt Eliza talked to him in no uncertain terms. No woman more sincerely admires her husband than does Aunt Eliza, but she just will not stand for profanity. And she told him so, then and there.

What Jimmy had told me about his subscription list interested me. After Uncle Henry had duly apologized for

his outrageous language, and the white dove of peace was hovering over Aunt Eliza's darning-basket, I said:

"Uncle Henry, why do you take both the *Clarion* and the *Palladium?*"

"I take the *Palladium* because I am a Republican," he replied. "It voices my political sentiments. And I take the *Clarion* to see what vile insinuations and malicious falsehoods it will utter against the party of Lincoln and Grant, of McKinley and Roosevelt, that I may be better able to refute them."

There was no denying Uncle Henry's Republicanism. It was of the blown-in-the-bottle variety.

"And—er—is this habit pretty general in the county? Do your friends and acquaintances also subscribe to both papers?"

"Well, now you mention it, John, I believe they do. You see, unless I read the scurrilities of the *Clarion,* I cannot properly appreciate the magnificent editorials in the *Palladium.*"

"Advertise in both, do you?" I asked.

"Oh, yes—yes. Never let politics interfere with business, my boy; never."

During the next few days I made several attempts to bring about a reconciliation between the boys, but without the slightest success. On any other subject they were perfectly rational, but each became rabid if the other was mentioned. I finally abandoned my attempts as hopeless.

One Saturday Jimmy printed a scorching editorial, in which, among other pleasantries, he asserted that the editor of the *Palladium* had "a soul like a pathogenic microbe." I have no idea any of his readers were real sure what a pathogenic microbe was, and I doubted whether Bob himself would recognize one if he met it, but it sounded like a deadly insult, and I was certain Bobby would be vexed. No man likes to be called a name he does not understand.

I looked up Jimmy to remonstrate with him, and found him at Uncle Henry's. On Saturday afternoons most of the farmers of Demorep County come into Booneburg with their families to buy things, play pool, swap horses, and gossip. The store was crowded.

While Jimmy and I were talking over by the ginghams and calicoes Bob came in. On seeing Jim, he pulled his soft hat down over his brow, scowled menacingly, and strode to the cutlery-counter opposite us.

"I want a sheath-knife," he announced loudly. "Gimme a six-inch sheath-knife, fit to stick pigs with."

The obsequious and half-scared-to-death clerk hastened to comply with his request. Bob hung the knife to his belt with a melodramatic air, and turned to scowl again at Peters.

When Jimmy started for the cutlery-counter I felt a crisis had been reached. The situation was fraught with disagreeable possibilities. I rapidly calculated chances. Undoubtedly every man in the store was a partizan and admirer of one or the other of the boys.

In my mind's eye, I pictured the general mêlée, and hastily ran over the weapons of offense and defense. There were ax-handles, rakes, potatoes, canned goods, brooms, Bermuda onions, and smoked-hams within easy reach.

I determined on a broom for mine. I did not want any one's blood on my head, and you can do a heap of whacking around with a broom without committing murder. If I had had a choice, I would have preferred New York to Booneburg at that moment.

Crossing the room, I walked by Jimmy in a way to bring me between the two when we reached the cutlery-counter, and even took the liberty of "hunching" him a little away from the immediate vicinity of the wrathful Mr. Needham.

"Gimme a *seven*-inch sheath-knife," demanded Jimmy loudly. "I want it to stick a *hog* with."

"Gentlemen, gentlemen!" It was Uncle Henry. "Remember where you are, gentlemen. There are ladies present, gentlemen. Respect the sex, gentlemen; respect the sex. John," he continued, turning to me appealingly, "take Mr. Peters to my office, will you? Mr. Peters, my dear Mr. Peters, let me beg you to go to my office with John. A

matter of importance, Mr. Peters. I want to double my advertising contract, and must talk it over with you."

Jimmy absolutely refused to go until sold a knife. On receiving it he also hung it to his belt, and then vociferously announced his desire to "have it out" with Needham then and there. I never saw such a pugnacious little chap. He was fast becoming a pest.

As I was considering the advisability of snatching a quilt from the bargain-counter, enveloping him in it, and carrying him bodily away, he suddenly consented to accompany me, basing his concession on the grounds that he hated to muss up Uncle Henry's store, even if he was a Republican.

In the meantime Uncle Henry was trying to pacify Bob, who was snorting with indignation and offering to bet as high as five to one that if "that little atom with the fried-egg head ever came at him with a knife, there would be people walking slow after him inside of three days." I am inclined to believe Uncle Henry also doubled his advertising with the *Palladium* that afternoon.

For the next few days the editorial columns of the *Clarion* and *Palladium* fairly sizzled. Uncle Henry had a system. He would read the *Clarion* editorials first, and, on finishing them, would be in a fit condition for an insanity inquest.

I have known him to lay down the paper, mutter unintelligibly to himself a minute or so, glance at Aunt Eliza, go to the wood-shed back of the house, and be gone a quarter of an hour, at least. Aunt Eliza cannot abide profanity as has been heretofore explained. She got 'way behind in her darning that week, keeping him from swearing by Judas on those occasions when he did not seek the seclusion of the wood-shed. Later, he would read the *Palladium* editorials and get calm enough to sleep.

One night he reversed the process, and Aunt Eliza confided to me in solemn tones that she heard him say "Damn!" in his sleep. It was just after this most unfortunate occurrence I persuaded him to stick to the *Clarion*-wood-shed-*Palladium* system.

The following Saturday afternoon, while the streets and stores of Booneburg were crowded, I left the *Palladium* office, arm in arm with Bobby, to walk over to Uncle Henry's store. As we were passing Lewisohn's jewelry-store, I felt Bob start violently and heard him say: "Ha!"

Looking up, I saw Jimmy Peters, who had been approaching us, stop, grasp the handle of his knife, and draw it from its sheath. Bob drew his knife, and the muscles of his body grew tense and rigid as he prepared to hurl himself on his foe.

I determined right there, if I got through that afternoon without seeing one or both of those boys hurt, or being carved up a bit myself, either some different arrangements would have to exist in the future, or I would leave town on the first train for the East. They kept me nervous.

I never did fancy this peacemaker business, anyhow. But the situation had to be met, so, shouting for help, I grasped Needham's knife-arm and threw the whole weight of my body against him.

The next few minutes were among the liveliest I recall. Bob had been right tackle on the college team, and the way he reared and charged around there was something awful. But weight and numbers finally got the best of him—he was soon lying on the sidewalk, with two men on each leg, one on each arm, and me sitting on his chest.

I glanced up, panting, to find Jimmy in the immediate foreground, similarly handicapped, except that his short legs would not accommodate two squatters, and therefore only harbored one each. A dense circle of shoppers, townspeople, and farmers completed the picture.

The crowd back of Peters parted as a large, red-faced party with a star on his coat, shouldered his way through. I recognized him as the chief of police, and breathed a sigh of relief. For a man ordered rest and quiet, I seemed to be doing well. The chief ordered

Bob and Jimmy to go before his honor, the mayor, then holding police court at the city hall. I said:

"Bobby, here's the cop. You're pinched. Will you go peaceably or shall we rope you?"

Bobby grinned feebly as he responded:

"Forget the rope. I'm no maverick. I'll go."

His honor fined them lightly for disturbing the peace, assault and battery, and a few other little things like that, and then bound both of them over in large sums to keep the peace. They promised me, on honor, to observe the order of the court.

A day or two later I made the startling discovery that my breakfast had consisted of a sirloin steak, three eggs, rolls, pancakes, preserves, coffee, and a number of other little knickknacks. I went to the store and weighed. The scales said I had gained fifteen pounds. I was sleeping nine hours a night, and actually whistled one morning before breakfast.

Careful consideration convinced me there was not the faintest excuse for me remaining longer in Booneburg, and, after a final futile attempt to reconcile the boys, I rescued my socks from Aunt Eliza's darning-basket, exacted a promise from Uncle Henry relative to a continuance of the *Clarion*-wood-shed-*Palladium* system, and started East.

Several months later I was sitting at a table in the red room at the Waldorf with some friends. During a pause in the conversation I glanced about the room. At a near-by table, his back to me, sat a short, slender young man with a red head. The shoulders and hair had a familiar look, but it is a far cry from the *Clarion* office to the Waldorf, and memory was at fault.

While trying to recall the connecting-link between the past and that brick-red head, I saw Bob Needham threading his way through the labyrinth of tables toward the auburn-haired one, and Jimmy's identity was revealed to me.

As Bob approached, Peters threw his hand back to his hip pocket. I sprang to my feet determined to prevent murder if possible, but before I could act, Jimmy pulled out a handkerchief and brushed some dust from his coat. In my relief I sank back in my chair.

Following Bob was a waiter with a quart of champagne in a cooler. The waiter filled two glasses, and the boys nodded amicably as they drank.

I excused myself to my friends and joined the editors. After greeting them, I asked Jimmy how the *Clarion* was coming on. He grinned broadly as he replied:

"Don't know. I sold out a month ago."

"Sold out! Who owns it now?"

"Jim Baxter, the sheriff, and a couple of his friends. They offered me a price where I could clean up about twenty thousand dollars, so I let go."

"Are you still editing the *Palladium?*" I asked, turning to Bob.

"Nope. Your uncle Henry and some of his friends were anxious to have a newspaper, and I accommodated them. I guess I cleaned up about as much as Jimmy."

"But your feud—your quarrel——"

Both boys were smiling broadly. Jimmy's right eye twinkled merrily as he tipped me a shameless wink with his left.

It pays to advertise!

The Night Pumper at Green River

By Charles Matthias

Author of "The Spoil of the Egyptian," "A Foothill Strategist," "Pico," Etc.

It often happens that the men who are filling comparatively lowly positions in life have deeply absorbing stories to tell. In Mr. Matthias' engrossing narrative the central figure has turned his back upon a certain part of his life that he would forget. But a chance glance at a newspaper brings the past before him and the man is transformed from a dull, easy-going, care-free night pumper to an intensely wideawake avenger. It is the awakening of the tiger, and results of the most dramatic character hang upon the awakening.

(*A Complete Novel*)

RISING from a dreary waste of sage-brush, greasewood, and sand that stretched away to the eastward, the morning sun threw his beams full into the face of Mr. William Blackton, night pumper for the Denver & Rio Grande Railroad Company, at Green River, Utah, as he sat dozing in a chair on the little platform in front of the pump-house. He squirmed uneasily under the glare, made two or three half-awake efforts to turn his head so as to avoid it, then gasped several times, and finally opened his eyes.

Once fairly awake, he swore softly to himself, jumped from his chair, and listened for a moment to the monotonous *chung-chang, chung-chang, chung-chang* of the pump that was forcing the pale-green water from the river into the huge tank that towered up beside the railroad track.

Then he walked briskly into the boiler-room, looked at the glass water-gage, tried the cocks as a double measure of precaution, opened the furnace-door and stirred up the blackening coals, threw in three or four shovels of fuel, and then, returning to his chair, sat down once more and gazed, blinking and yawning, at the unattractive landscape.

Half a mile away, toward the west, he could see the hamlet of Green River—four saloons with bunk-house attachment, a combined blacksmith shop and feed-store, and a general store, whose trade was mostly in salt-pork and cartridges.

The yells of a party of cowboys, who had ridden over from Grand Valley the preceding evening, and who were still enjoying themselves after the manner of their tribe in Jack Dunn's "tunnel" or dugout saloon, were borne faintly to his ears by the morning breeze that swept over the mesa; and the occasional crack of a six-shooter told him that Mr. Dunn's guests, in the exuberance of their enjoyment, were further perforating the roof of that gentleman's establishment, which already bore the appearance of a huge sieve, as the result of similar previous attentions.

Such sounds as these, however, had long ago lost their novelty for Mr. Blackton. Ten years passed west of the one hundredth meridian had familiarized him with all those sights and sounds that attract the curiosity of the

newcomer from the lands on the hither side of the Mississippi. Adaptable, unexacting, careless of comfort or, indeed, of anything save the absolute necessities—clothes, food, and shelter—he had been by turns cowboy, prospector, railroader on half a dozen mountain lines, wood-chopper, freighter, driver of four to eight span of mules hitched to a Conestoga wagon—anything and everything at which a living could be made by a man willing to work for it.

Mr. Blackton had seen and tried it all. He knew men of his own kind over many hundreds of miles, and was neither better nor worse than the average of them. There was a vague belief among his acquaintances—intimates he had none—that he had once been married and that his wife had gone to the bad; in other words, that she had run off with another man. Whether this misty rumor were true or not, it was certain that, if he had ever had a liking for the sex, he had thoroughly overcome it.

And, in truth, he looked as little like a ladies' man as possible as he sat there that morning, a little lean man, with a big tawny mustache, grizzled hair, and a reddish-purple scar on his cheek—reminder of a struggle with a refractory mule that had stopped the wheels of progress in Montana three or four years before.

Nor did his felt hat, blue flannel shirt, and high-heeled cowboy boots tend to give him the air of a carpet knight. He looked just what he was, a rough and ready "rustler," capable of turning a hand to almost anything.

It is but fair to say, however, that he was not looking his best on that particular morning, for the reason that, save for the uneasy nap from which he had just awakened, he had had no sleep to speak of during two days and as many nights. He had been very busy, after a fashion, and this particular fashion was an exhausting one. That is to say, Mr. Blackton had been gambling.

When the pay-car had stopped at Green River a week previous, Mr. Blackton had received his monthly wages, some sixty-five or seventy dollars, and, after paying what he owed at the eating-house and the "tunnel," he had something like thirty-five dollars left.

There was no faro game in any of the Green River saloons, and he wrestled with temptation for the next two days. Then he succumbed, made an arrangement with his "side partner," the day pumper, to work night and day until he returned, got on a train and rode up to Pleasant Valley, the end of the division.

Pleasant Valley—this was in the year 1883—was so named because it was the vilest and most uninviting spot this side of the orthodox Sheol. Drunken coal-miners, equally alcoholic quarrymen, tin-horn gamblers, overland tramps, and other offscourings of creation, made up the heterogeneous population of some six hundred souls—if souls they had.

The inhabitants were divided into two classes—those who dealt faro and sold whisky, and those who "played bank" and drank whisky. The first-named got the money, and the last had the fun—or thought they had. Sometimes, however, a lamb would shear the wolves.

When Mr. Blackton alighted from the train in this delectable valley he strolled in and out of the various "hurdy-gurdies," took a drink with a chance acquaintance, and looked in on several faro games in progress.

It was some time before he found a place to please him. In one he didn't like the looks of the dealer; in another a cross-eyed man was "keeping cases"; in a third he stumbled as he crossed the threshold. He couldn't afford to risk his thirty-five dollars against any of these games. Finally, however, he found himself in the establishment of Mr. Alexander McCrorie, known in that region as "Scotty"; known also as a square man, and one who had divers notches on the handle of his six-shooter.

Mr. McCrorie, by the way, to digress a little, was a peculiar and rather unusual specimen of the genus man-killer. His reputation was not one of those made by dark hints about "the

man that went up agin' me down in Durango and never went up agin' no one else"; or, "feller that didn't shoot swift enough over in the Gunnison country when we had an argyment over a maverick."

No, his reputation was not of that kind. Every one of his achievements was known from Salida to Salt Lake City along the Rio Grande road. Mr. McCrorie had earned his fame by untiring industry and strict attention to business.

He was a most meek and unassuming person. His eyes were a very light gray and rather watery. His mustache, of no particular color, drooped over his mouth in forlorn and ragged fashion. Naturally below the medium height, he was very much stoop-shouldered, and this added to his general appearance of apologizing for being alive.

His humble bearing probably had much to do with his killing ways. "Bad men" searching for some safe subject upon whom to display their wit or vent their ill humor would select Mr. McCrorie, and would not discover their mistake until they were fitted out with a pair of wings and a harp. He was not an unmixed evil.

Into the gambling-house presided over by this gentleman strolled Mr. Blackton. He looked on for awhile, making mental notes of the run of the cards, and then began to play.

He had an intimate acquaintance with the noble game of faro; in fact, during his omnivorous western career he had now and then sat on the dealer's side of the table. No man knew better than he the value of "pressing his luck," and when he began to win he increased his bets.

All the time-honored, regulation tactics were employed against him in vain. They changed the dealer on him twice without avail. They put in new cards, and he "called the turn for the limit." They tried to get him to drink whisky; he refused, and continued to win right through the deal.

Finally, as a last resort, the great Scotty himself, Achilles of the host, sat down to deal, but even his transcendent skill and genius were unavailing; the fates were with Mr. Blackton.

At last, in the middle of a deal, Mr. McCrorie stopped and "sized up" the checks in front of his antagonist. Then he turned the dealing-box softly face downward on the table, and announced calmly, in a voice unruffled by emotion: "That breaks us, partner; cash in."

Mr. Blackton had won twenty-five hundred dollars and broken the bank, a feat quite as deserving of mention as if he had done the same thing at Monte Carlo, for it should be remembered that he labored under many disadvantages.

He "staked" two or three admiring acquaintances to small amounts, invited every one present to take a drink, and walked out of the gambling-house and down to the railroad with his money in his pocket.

Now, if he had either got drunk and spent his money, or "run up against a brace-box" and lost it; or—third possibility—if he had got aboard a train and returned to Green River that evening, this story never would have been written. There would have been none to tell.

Fate, however, in which Mr. Blackton, like all other gamblers, was a firm believer—fate ordained that the eastbound train should be late that day, and further, that, while he loitered around the ramshackle station waiting for it, the westbound train should clatter in. The conductor, as he glanced up and down the platform, saw Mr. Blackton standing there, leaning against the freight-room, and called to him.

"Hi, Billy!" he said. "Going over to Salt Lake?"

"No; going back to Green River on number four."

"Four's three hours late. You'd better come with us and go back to the 'River' to-morrow. Skip on," he continued, as the train began to move.

Mr. Blackton hesitated a moment, cast his eye over the unattractive surroundings; reflected hurriedly that a three hours' wait would be tiresome with nothing to do save loiter around the saloons and gambling-houses, which had now lost their charm; then he

swung on to the last car of the train as it labored out toward Soldier Summit.

Lights twinkled in windows and in street lamps when the train arrived in Salt Lake City. Three or four hotel hacks were backed up at the station platform, their attendant runners voicing the praises of the respective establishments they represented as the travelers alighted.

Mr. Blackton preferred to walk uptown. As he started he noticed how long the blocks were, and, consequently, how great the distance between the street lamps. He grinned at the thought that he wouldn't have paid any attention to these matters seven or eight hours before. Now, however, he was a "capitalist," as he would have expressed it, and wealth brought its cares and responsibilities.

He transferred his six-shooter from his hip pocket to the side pocket of his coat, struck into the middle of the street, and trudged thoughtfully onward.

On Main Street, after he had left the ill-lighted and deserted side streets behind him, a friend—a freight-conductor off duty—hailed him, and the two walked along together. As they neared the Walker House, where it was Mr. Blackton's purpose to invite his friend to join him in a prefatory drink, a carriage drove up and stopped in front of the hotel.

"English tourists," said Mr. Blackton's friend, as the occupants of the carriage prepared to alight; "you can tell 'em a mile off."

Mr. Blackton's gaze, which had wandered up the street toward the great Mormon temple, was recalled. He looked at the people in the carriage. A young man, of twenty-eight or thirty, was gathering up some wraps that lay beside him on the seat of the open carriage. Opposite him sat a placid old lady strongly resembling him in features, and at her side was a handsome, brown-haired woman, who might have been twenty-five or thirty-five years old —one of those women who wear well and do not betray their age.

"Hello!" from Mr. Blackton.

"What?" said the freight-conductor inquiringly. Then, noticing that Mr. Blackton was staring at the younger woman in the carriage—"Good-looking woman, hey? Some of 'em are handsome. When you get a real swell English woman she is handsome, sure, but when she isn't, she's as ugly as the devil."

"You're right about that," responded Mr. Blackton, as he watched the young man and the two women enter the hotel; "some of 'em are as ugly as the devil. Let's go and take a drink before supper."

Mr. Blackton walked into the hotel office and up to the desk; he picked up a pen and wrote his name in the register. Then he turned back two or three days' entries in the book, running his eye down each page as he turned the leaves. He came to these entries:

Mr. and Mrs. Henry Leven, England.
Mrs. Margaret Leven, England.

"Are these the people that just came in?" he asked, pointing to the entries in the register—"big, young Englishman, good-looking woman, and an old lady?"

The clerk looked at the names. "Yes, that's the party. Been out to Fort Douglass and doing the town generally. Been here two days and going East to-morrow night. Friend with you to supper? All right," he continued, and made some hieroglyphics on the register as Mr. Blackton and his companion disappeared in the dining-room.

Seated in the billiard-room puffing a brier-root pipe, Mr. Blackton, later on, discoursed of indifferent matters with his friend until that gentleman declared it time for him to be getting down to the railroad yard to see to the making up of his train, for he was to journey eastward that night.

Left alone, Mr. Blackton still puffed at his pipe, and watched in abstracted fashion two commercial travelers playing billiards at the table in front of him. Finally, he hailed a bell-boy hurrying by.

"Perhaps you'd like to make a dollar," he said, producing a coin of that denomination and displaying it between thumb and forefinger.

The bell-boy was acquisitive but cautious. "What do you want me to do?" he demanded. "If it has anything to do with a poker game in your bedroom I can't do it. They won't have it, and——"

"No," interrupted Mr. Blackton soberly, "I don't want you to 'cap' a skin game for me. This is entirely legitimate. Go and get me a blank card from the desk. Thank you. Now"—writing something on it—"put that in your pocket, and when you get a chance, hand it to Mrs. Leven, that young English woman. You know her, don't you? Better wait until her husband is out of the way. Here's your dollar, and I'll give you another one if you don't make a mess of it."

Mr. Blackton smoked and waited in the billiard-room, occasionally lounging into the office, where other men were smoking, lounging, and talking. The bell-boy flitted in and out upon various errands, but made no sign.

Men talked mining and cattle-raising; strolled into the barroom, drank, and talked mining and cattle-raising again. Other men read newspapers and dozed in their chairs. Still others yawned vociferously, stretched themselves, called for their room keys, and went off to bed.

The crowd had begun to thin out when Mr. Blackton's emissary came from the upper regions, walked to where he was seated, and whispered: "She's in Parlor D."

Mr. Blackton nodded without speaking, and remained seated for some moments. Then he, too, went to the clerk's desk and asked for his key. His bell-boy was conveniently at hand, and the clerk gave him the customary order to show the gentleman to so-and-so.

On the second floor the bell-boy pointed to a half-open door. Mr. Blackton reached into his pocket, drew forth a coin, and handed it to his guide, who thanked him and disappeared, leaving him alone in the hall.

In the room with the half-open door some one was playing Weber's "Invitation to the Dance," touching the keys of the piano softly and caressingly. A breeze from the Wahsatch Mountains fluttered the curtains of the window at the end of the hall. The street below was almost deserted, and only an occasional footfall echoed along the pavement. In the hotel itself, save for the piano, there was no sound.

Mr. Blackton stood and listened for a moment, beating time involuntarily with his foot upon the carpet to the rhythm of the music. Then he shrugged his shoulders, advanced to the door, and walked into the room.

The woman at the piano was not the young English woman, and for a moment he thought the boy had played him a trick, until he saw at the farther end of the long room the sheen of a white dress. The piano-player's back was turned to him, and he walked across the room and sat down, as Mrs. Leven, by a gesture, indicated to him.

As she did so she held out her hand to him—a small, shapely, white, ladylike hand—a perfect hand, save that the third finger was missing, the stump being covered by a little black silk cap.

Mr. Blackton evidently had not counted upon the friendly movement, but the offer was so plain, so ostentatious almost, that he put out his own hand and pressed the one offered him with something like cordiality. Then he waited for her to speak.

"I got your card," she said at last, looking curiously at him; "and, though I couldn't imagine how you came here or why you should care to see me, I sent my husband to bed, and then told the boy to bring you up here. You needn't mind her," she continued, in answer to a motion of his head in the direction of the piano. "She doesn't know me—some guest of the hotel—and it would make no difference if she did know me. You and I have no terrible secrets to exchange, have we?"

She smiled, and he looked at her as curiously as she had a moment before regarded him. "You are not looking prosperous," she went on, taking him

in from head to foot with a quick glance. "Perhaps——"

"You are mistaken," interrupted Mr. Blackton; "I have plenty of money—that is, it seems plenty to me—more than I have had for a long time before. To tell you the truth," he went on, "I hardly know why I wanted to see you—to talk to you, I mean. I saw you and your husband—the tall, young fellow is your husband?—getting out of the carriage in front of the hotel, and the first glance at you—*caramba!*—it almost took my breath away! I thought for an instant it was Laura. You look more like her as you grow older. I never saw such a resemblance. Anyway, I thought I'd like to have a little talk with you for old times' sake. There's no need to ask if you're prosperous. I suppose your husband is rich. Who is he, and where did you get him—or he get you?"

A little line on either side of the nose, reaching down to the corner of the mouth, gradually melted away from Mrs. Leven's face as Mr. Blackton talked familiarly on, and she smiled again as she spoke.

"I met him at home in Lancashire. You know when Laura died you were——" she stopped short.

"I was in jail," said Mr. Blackton calmly, helping her out. "Go on."

"Well—I didn't mean to recall that, but you know I was left alone in Philadelphia with little money and no friends, so I returned to England. There I, at least, had relatives, as you know, near Oldham. They received me kindly, and in a little time I met Mr. Leven. He—well, he liked me, and so did his mother, who is the kindest old lady in the world; so there was no difficulty. He is a dear, good fellow; not rich, as you think, but well off. We get along nicely. We are taking this American trip because he wanted to see the places where I lived when Laura and I were together. I have told him all about our hard times, and all that."

"And about me?"

"Not by name, no; and I didn't tell him just all about Laura. You wouldn't have expected me to do so, would you?" she asked, as if appealing to his judgment.

"Well, no," he replied; "not if you intended to tell the truth—as nearly as a woman can. That constituted the principal difference between you and Laura. Her aversion to the truth was constitutional."

"Laura was my sister," said Mrs. Leven, a little flutter perceptible in her nostrils.

"Yes, and she was my wife," replied Mr. Blackton calmly—"worse luck for me. It's not worth while to quarrel over Laura. But there's one thing I really should like to know, and I think you can tell me. Who forged the check? Was it she or Marshall who did the work?"

The little lines down to the corners of Mrs. Leven's mouth became distinct again.

"It was charged that you forged it," she said.

Mr. Blackton looked at her steadily. "Now, what is your idea in saying that to me?" he said, almost reflectively. "You and I were good enough friends, and I never credited you with complicity in any of Laura's deviltry. What is your idea in saying that to me when you know perfectly well that the accusation was false?"

"Yet you went to State's prison for it."

There was a pause. Mr. Blackton again looked hard at the woman, as if puzzled.

"You've certainly developed some of Laura's mental traits along with your physical resemblance to her," he said, at last. "I suppose I shouldn't blame you, though. Laura, as you say, was your sister, and even if she did outdo Becky Sharp by sending me, her husband, to the penitentiary on a false charge of forgery, while she and her lover lived riotously on the proceeds——"

"You lie!" exclaimed Mrs. Leven, clenching her hands and bending forward, her face white with passion.

Mr. Blackton leaned back in his chair. In his eyes there was a look of astonishment mingled with growing

suspicion. The woman at the piano had heard the vehement exclamation, and, after striking a few disconnected chords, arose, glanced curiously at the incongruous pair, and left the room.

The movement seemed to recall Mrs. Leven to her senses. "Oh, I beg your pardon," she said, trying to smile, "but you really shouldn't talk that way. Nothing is to be gained by raking up that old affair. Besides, you know that I had nothing to do with it."

"Certainly not, certainly not," assented Mr. Blackton hastily. "Still, living in the same house with her, as you did for some little time after my—disappearance, I naturally thought that you might have had some information about the—the matter, you know."

"None at all," replied Mrs. Leven, who by this time had regained her composure, and with it an anxiety to appear conciliatory. "Laura gave me none of her confidence. I knew some things, of course, but what could I do? I couldn't tell you of them at the time, and when she died I went back to England, as I have told you."

The look of suspicion in Mr. Blackton's eyes had deepened as the woman talked. When she finished he spoke deliberately.

"It was perhaps just as well for every one that Laura died when she did," said he. "When I was released from the penitentiary my intention was to kill her first and then kill Marshall."

The little lines became sharper than ever.

"As I say, fortunately for every one, Laura was dead."

He paused a moment; Mrs. Leven tried to look unconcerned.

"It may interest you to know, however," he went on, "that I was able to carry out a part of my intention. I met Marshall seven years ago—and shot him."

Mrs. Leven stared at him, her teeth shut. She threw her right hand back of her head, and brought it forward again over her shoulder, with the palm to the front—a peculiar movement.

"Ah," said Mr. Blackton quietly, "I *know* you now."

The woman strove to speak. Then she attempted to rise from her chair. Still staring at him, she struggled to her feet, but almost immediately sank down again, gasped for breath, and quietly fainted.

"Couldn't control her temper," said Mr. Blackton contemplatively; "always her weakness."

He showed no sign of alarm or flurry. Evidently he had seen women faint before, or he had counted upon this one fainting. A queer look—half-satisfaction, half-disgust—came upon his face.

He walked to a table where a bunch of flowers rested in a clear glass vase half-filled with water. He threw the flowers on the floor, and picked up the vase. Then he set it down again, and walked back to where Mrs. Leven was lying in the chair.

He hesitated a moment, and then, taking her right hand, which hung limp over the arm of the chair, he drew off the little black silk cap that covered the maimed finger. Again the look of mingled satisfaction and disgust appeared.

Dropping the hand, he went back, picked up the vase, and, dipping his fingers in the water, began sprinkling the woman's face. A few drops ran down, making spots on her white dress. He put the vase back on the table, resumed his seat, and waited.

When Mrs. Leven recovered consciousness she saw him sitting there, calm, unconcerned. He might have been a spectator of some theatrical performance for any emotion that he manifested.

"Do you feel better?" he asked at last, in a matter-of-fact way.

She looked bewildered; then her remembrance returned.

"Do you feel better?" he asked again.

"What are you going to do?" she asked, paying no attention to his question. "Are you going to tell my—Mr. Leven?"

Mr. Blackton regarded her with cool interest. "You have more sense than I gave you credit for," he replied. "You don't think it worth while to attempt to hoodwink me any longer. That

is sensible. *Por Dios!* I almost admire you." And he lay back in his chair and regarded her critically.

"You fooled me," he confessed at length, "until you told me that I lied; then I suspected you. You're the only woman alive that could say it just that way. Then, you know, I had heard you tell me the same thing so often before. Well, well," he went on, looking at her with the approval that one bestows upon an ingenious machine, "if you hadn't lost your temper, I should have been completely fooled.

"And yet I shouldn't have been," he went on reflectively. "There were two or three tricks of voice and gesture that I should have recognized. It was that finger that threw me off. That was an inspiration, but what must it have cost you to spoil your pretty hand."

"Will you answer my question?" she demanded. "What are you going to do? Do you mean to tell Mr. Leven?"

"Why, no; at least, not until I have had another talk with you," he replied. "That can be arranged, I suppose."

"We were to leave to-morrow," she answered.

"Find means to stay longer," he said. "I must really insist upon it. The—pleasure of meeting you, having deemed you dead these many years, is something that you can readily comprehend. I'm sure you appreciate my feelings."

"I will find some way to see you to-morrow," said the woman, still pale. "I—I am tired; I must go."

Mr. Blackton helped her from her chair. She walked slowly from the room, leaving him alone.

He leaned back in his chair and stared at the chandelier for some moments.

"Waugh!" he exclaimed, using the aboriginal note of admiration, "she's a great woman, even though she's a thorough devil. She hasn't eradicated the woman side of her completely, though. That finger, now. She had nerve enough to mutilate it, but too much vanity to take it off close to the hand. That was a weakness. If I had found that finger as it should have been if she had played the deal through, it would almost have shaken me. She weakened, though, when I told her I had killed Marshall. She cared for Marshall if she cared for any one. I wonder if she realizes that I lied to her about killing him."

He stared at the chandelier again.

"Offered to shake hands with me so that I'd notice that the finger was missing," he went on, addressing the chandelier. "That wasn't a good play, for I wondered at it at the time."

Another pause.

"Now, how the devil did she deceive the doctor and the neighbors into believing that it was she and not Annie who died? Annie did die—one of them died; I've found that out to a certainty. I must make her tell me about it."

A servant came to turn out the lights in the parlor. Mr. Blackton stared at the man for a moment without seeing him, and then went off to bed.

At nine o'clock the next morning he emerged from the breakfast-room, lighted a pipe, and took up his old position in the billiard-room. He seemed undecided.

But there are children who are born with that receptiveness—financially—and that intuition that make up the character of a good detective. One of this kind was Mr. Blackton's bell-boy. This urchin hungered for more money, and his instinct told him that it might be had in exchange for information concerning Mrs. Leven.

Thus, while Mr. Blackton was debating with himself what to do next, the boy sought him out and beckoned him to a more removed spot. The youth showed his knowledge of human nature by refraining from asking for money in advance.

He merely drew two telegram blanks from his pocket. "Here," he said; "I thought you might like to see these. I've been sent to the telegraph-office with 'em."

Mr. Blackton took the two slips of paper without a word. One contained a cablegram addressed to the Reverend George Leven, at a small town in Lancashire. It ran:

All well; homeward bound.

The other was a telegram to a Denver hotel requesting that rooms be reserved for a date two days later.

Mr. Blackton made no scruple about reading them. When he had done so he said:

"Buttons, you have a remarkable head for your age. You will either be a great man or you will wind up in the penitentiary; you show tendencies both ways, which is not unusual. Here is more money. Take it, Buttons, and beware that your propensity for getting money does not some day get you into jail."

This adjuration in no manner disturbed the equanimity of the youngster, who thanked Mr. Blackton courteously and started for the telegraph-office.

"Wait a minute," called Mr. Blackton after him. "Come back. I've one more small job for you. Get me another blank card—the telegrams won't spoil."

The card was brought, and Mr. Blackton, after reflecting a moment, wrote:

Upon second thought, I see no use in going over matters again. I leave this morning. Good-by.

He did not sign the message.

"Give that to Mrs. Leven when you come back from the telegraph-office; and keep your head shut if she tries to pump you. Be a wise boy. You *sabe?*"

"Sure," replied the youth laconically, as he started once more upon his errand.

"Now, then," reflected Mr. Blackton, "they'll probably go to Denver, according to program, and if I want them I can find them. The question is, Do I really want to see any more of madame? What's the use? What shall I gain by raising Cain, as I undoubtedly can, if I feel disposed that way?

"Still," he went on, "here's this young Leven. He's probably crazy over her, and she's quite likely to play some nasty trick on him unless his eyes are opened. She can scarcely get him into the penitentiary—hardly possible. Still—I don't know just what my play ought to be. It's a case that requires deliberation, and, as the 'River' is about as conducive to reflection as any place I know of, I'll go down there, let my side partner, O'Reilly, get a night's sleep, and think the thing over."

An hour later Mr. Blackton was on board an eastbound train, and within eight hours more he was at the pump-house inquiring of O'Reilly how he "stood the racket."

Mr. O'Reilly, a little red around the eyes and stretchy as to the limbs, announced, as in duty bound, that he was all right, and could stand another night, if necessary.

"It's not necessary, Pat," said Mr. Blackton; "I'm all right for to-night myself. Tumble into your bunk and get twelve hours' sleep, for I'm going to jump the job to-morrow, and you may have to work double trick again until they send a man to take my place."

"Stone won't pay ye if ye quit him without notice," said Mr. O'Reilly, by way of warning.

Mr. Blackton promptly cursed Stone and his pay. "I made a winning at Pleasant Valley," he explained, "and I wouldn't be back here at all except to give you a chance to get some sleep."

"Ye're a good felly, Bill," said Mr. O'Reilly, standing in the door of the lean-to in which the bunks were set up. "There's mighty few would come back on that account. Good night," he concluded, and he disappeared in the shanty.

"Good night," replied Mr. Blackton.

He burned a good deal of tobacco during the lonely hours that followed. He watched the moon rise over the mesa, dimming the stars that had twinkled so brilliantly through the clear, thin air.

Two or three times, after trains had passed, he walked over the bridge that spanned the river just east of the water-tank to see that no ember from the locomotive had set fire to the structure. Occasionally he threw a little coal into the furnace.

Toward morning he became drowsy. Not caring to trust himself too far, he banked the fire beneath the boiler, after seeing that the water showed in the

third gage, and then sat down again, knowing that if he did go to sleep, the worst that could happen would be the stopping of the pump for lack of steam. He strove to keep awake—successfully at first, and then without avail.

At last he fell into an uneasy doze, from which he was awakened by the sun, as it rose from the waste of sage-brush, greasewood, and sand to the eastward, shining full in his face.

"Pat!" he cried, stepping to the door of the lean-to after everything had been put in order—"Pat! get out of that, and let's go to breakfast."

There was a succession of snorts and groans from within, as of a heavy sleeper struggling with a desire to roll over and take another hour of it. Then a thump on the floor announced that Mr. O'Reilly had conquered the desires of the flesh, and a moment later that gentleman appeared at the door airily attired in a pair of trousers and a red undershirt.

"Whoo!" he said, stretching himself like a giant refreshed, and blinking in the bright sunlight like a young owl—"I feel tin years younger. It's a great sleep I had, Bill. How did ye fare yerself?"

"I banked the fire and had a nap," replied Mr. Blackton. "By the way, the water lacks only a foot of the top. There's no use keeping the pump going. I'll bank up again, and we'll go to breakfast. But first I want to get a few things together in that war-bag of mine. I'm not coming back here again."

Mr. Blackton busied himself in the shanty while the Irishman was dressing himself. The articles which he could crowd into his small valise were few. What was left—not a very valuable collection, to be sure—old coats, boots, a half-worn saddle, two or three flannel shirts, and a Winchester rifle, he gave to O'Reilly.

"You can't use all of them yourself, Pat," he said, "the clothes mostly being too small for you; but they'll be all right for some poor devil tramping it past here. Give them to him with my compliments."

"Ye're a good felly, Bill," repeated the Irishman.

"Who told you so?" retorted Mr. Blackton, by way of evading the compliment. "Just a minute, Pat," he said, as they started to go, having stopped the pump and deadened the fire. He had been fumbling in his pocket. "Here's a hundred I want you to take for good luck."

O'Reilly backed away from the outstretched hand that contained the little roll of bills.

"Kape your money, Bill," he said; "I know well enough you're my friend without any money between us."

"You're an Irish fool, Pat," said Mr. Blackton calmly. "You've earned the hundred, and more, too, because if you hadn't filled my trick I couldn't have gone to Pleasant Valley to make the winning. You ought to have half of it by rights. So you won't take it? All right; then under the boiler it goes."

But Mr. O'Reilly, being a reasonable person, was not proof against this kind of argument, and when Mr. Blackton had opened the furnace-door, and was actually about to throw the money on the smoldering coals, he relented, and reluctantly pocketed it, reiterating the assertion that his partner was "a good felly."

Mr. Blackton loitered on the road to Denver. He seemed not altogether sure of what he wanted to do. He stopped a day at Grand Junction and renewed old acquaintances. Two days he lingered at Gunnison—this was in the old, narrow-gage days, remember. He spied a friend on the platform at Salida, and twenty-fours hours more slipped by.

At Pueblo he got off the train and bought a newspaper from a vociferating urchin. He went back into the car and sat down, undecided whether to go on to Denver or stay over a train at Pueblo. He glanced idly over the columns of the Denver morning paper which he had bought, and a staring display head caught his eye.

It was evidently the work of a headline artist, and it told, in assorted type, of the disappearance of an English lady

who had, with her husband, been stopping at the Grand Hotel. As he hurriedly skimmed the article, he saw that it referred to Mrs. Leven.

The circumstances of her disappearance were given at great length. She had last been seen early Thursday evening—the paper was a Saturday morning issue.

Her husband, the account said, had thought little of her absence at first, thinking that she had left the hotel to do some shopping, but as the evening wore on without her return, he became alarmed, and set out to search for her. Failing to find her, the police were called in, but their efforts, too, were futile.

Mrs. Leven's jewelry was missing, a fact which, according to the police, showed that her disappearance was voluntary. Her husband maintained that she had either been murdered for the sake of her jewels, or that she had suddenly become mentally unbalanced and fled from some imaginary danger.

The corners of Mr. Blackton's mouth twitched as he read this last surmise.

Every means had been employed, the account continued, to learn the whereabouts of the missing woman. The railroad trains had been watched, telegrams had been sent in all directions, disreputable characters capable of robbing and murdering the unfortunate lady were gathered into the police-stations—everything was done that experience could suggest or money pay for.

Mr. Leven's distress was vividly depicted. He declared, the account said, that the relations between himself and his wife had been most affectionate; they never had quarreled; she had had everything she wanted, and there was no reason why she should have fled voluntarily.

Away down at the end of the two-column "story" was a paragraph, evidently written as an afterthought, and considered of no importance:

An absurd rumor connecting the name of a guest at the hotel with Mrs. Leven's disappearance has been set at rest—if any refutation were required—by the return of the gentleman in question from Cheyenne, where he has been attending to matters in connection with his cattle interests.

Mr. Blackton read this paragraph over three or four times, and decided to go on to Denver.

When he reached that city his first proceeding was to exchange his well-worn clothes for a modest but well-fitting ready-made suit, and his next was to register at the hotel where the Levens were staying.

He heard little gossip respecting the woman's disappearance. The affair had already lost its freshness. He heard nothing at all of the maligned gentleman engaged in the cattle industry. When it became evident that he was to make little progress, for the time, at least, Mr. Blackton cast about him for some means of distraction.

Now, as some people seek solace in music, others in books, and still others in dramatic representations, so Mr. Blackton's "particular vanity" was, as has hereinbefore been shown, the green cloth.

He was too much in earnest in his more serious purposes, however, to take any chances of failure for lack of money; so when he ascertained by casual inquiry the whereabouts of the nearest faro-bank, he prudently deposited the bulk of his money in the hotel safe and sallied forth with only a small portion of his capital in his pocket.

Three games were "running" in the establishment to which he found his way. Two layouts were almost deserted, however, while around the third the crowd stood three-deep. Toward this third table, Mr. Blackton, after a momentary survey of the room, directed his steps.

As he approached, feeling in his pockets for some money, he discovered that, of the men around the table, but one was playing. It was one of those gambling duels between the bank and a courageous gamester, in which the bets are so heavy and the struggle so interesting that the smaller players retire from the game to watch the battle and give the contesting forces a clear field.

This sort of thing, even to the uninitiated, has a certain fascination, and to

Mr. Blackton, who was a past master in the art of punting, it was in the highest degree attractive.

He pushed his way through the crowd, excusing himself with great politeness as he did so—for nowhere is courtesy, in language, at least, more scrupulously exacted than in a gambling-house—and finally attained a position from which he could see the player who was "bucking the bank."

Catching sight of the man, Mr. Blackton involuntarily reached for his six-shooter. Then he pulled his hat down over his eyes and drew back. He still kept within reach of the table.

The dealer, a fat, stolid-looking fellow of thirty-five or forty, was in his shirt-sleeves. He was apparently the most uninterested person in the room as he pushed the cards from the little silver box with an air of languid indifference that was in the highest degree professional. A handkerchief twisted into a sort of loose rope lay across his knees, and from time to time he wiped his face with it.

Across the table, or layout, sat his opponent, apparently equaling the dealer in indifference. Light hair, closely cropped at the back and sides; a thin, blond mustache, light-gray eyes, with black points in the center; a long, straight nose, and a square, heavy chin —rather a handsome man at first sight, but not so pleasant to look upon after closer inspection.

This man was losing—losing heavily —but bearing his losses with an imperturbability that extorted an occasional grunt of approval from even the dealer himself as he swept a heavy bet from the board and deposited it in the "check-rack" at his right hand. There was no conversation; all interest was centered on the fall of the cards.

Mr. Blackton, still keeping his hand in his hip pocket, backed out of the throng, extricating himself so quietly as to excite no attention from the absorbed onlookers. He walked toward a man who was sitting in a corner of the room smoking a cigar and staring into vacancy—unmistakably a dealer off duty.

"Who's that fellow stacking 'em up over there?" inquired Mr. Blackton, indicating by a gesture the game he had just left.

The man with the cigar yawned, stretched himself, and replied: "Jim Martin; cattle man; good, liberal player."

"Boards at the Grand when he's in town, doesn't he?"

"Think he does."

"I thought I saw him there early this evening," said Mr. Blackton, taking a cigar from his pocket and lighting it. "The reason I noticed him particularly was because I thought I saw him in Cheyenne yesterday. I'm from up that way."

"You're right about that, too," replied the listless man. "He has been to Cheyenne; heard him say so two or three times this evening."

"Thought I wasn't mistaken," said Mr. Blackton, puffing at his cigar. "Well, I'm doing no good here while this cattle gent is hoisting the ceiling; I think I'll go to bed. Good night."

"Night," replied the dealer off duty, resuming his stare at the opposite wall; "drop in again."

The young Englishman was packing his belongings the next morning when a card with the name "William Blackton" written upon it was handed to him. When the owner of the name followed the card into the room a few moments later Leven did not invite him to take a seat.

"Are you a reporter or a detective?" he asked, as Mr. Blackton stood, somewhat ill at ease, near the door. "I seem to have no other visitors."

"I'm neither," replied Mr. Blackton. "Not to waste your time, I will tell you at once that I am not a mere intruder, either. May I ask if you've heard anything from your—from Mrs. Leven? I'll tell you later why I ask."

The younger man stopped abruptly in his work of gathering up some small articles, and faced his visitor.

"Have you heard from her?" persisted Mr. Blackton. "I imagine from your manner that you have. I'm going

to tell you presently why I'm sticking my nose into this business," he continued, lapsing into the language that had grown familiar to him of late years. "I'm going to do you a service, though you probably won't thank me for it; that cuts no figure, though."

A faint flush came into Leven's face. "I don't know why you should intrude yourself upon me and interfere with my private affairs," he said. "Good morning," he concluded significantly, glancing toward the door and then turning to resume his packing.

Mr. Blackton looked a little annoyed, but that was all.

"Well," he said, rising, "I can't find fault with you for resenting what really does look like a piece of impertinence. I thought I might be able to let you down a little easier if I found out in advance how the land lay. However, as you will not have it that way, I'll have to tell you why I'm so much interested in your misfortune—if you've a mind to call it that."

Leven turned and faced him.

"Well?" he said quietly.

"It's a rather awkward thing to tell you," began Mr. Blackton, with some embarrassment, "and, as I said, I didn't want to tell you if I could help it. But the fact is," he continued, pulling at his mustache, "you're not that woman's husband at all. Unfortunately for me, I am!"

The younger man steadied himself by grasping the back of a chair.

"You say that you are her husband! Of course, you must realize that that is a most startling and extraordinary statement to my ears. Will you explain?"

"I will," said Mr. Blackton firmly. "Let me smoke? Thanks." He lighted his pipe and went on:

"That woman's name is Laura Harriet Blackton. My name is William Blackton. We were married in the city of Philadelphia in 1869. She is English by birth. She and her sister Annie, who greatly resembled her—a fact which you will do well to remember—lived in the same boarding-house with me. Their father died soon after they came to America, leaving the girls alone and practically without resources. Laura made up her mind to marry me, and did marry me. I happened to be the most available man, and she married me as a matter of convenience, because I could support herself and her sister until she found some one that suited her better. I discovered this soon enough.

"The knowledge didn't worry me particularly either. She despised me, and, as that sort of sentiment breeds a similar feeling, it was not long until I despised her. When she finally met the man who suited her better than I did, which happened less than a year after our marriage, she got rid of me in artistic style. I'll give her credit for being a thoroughly smart woman."

Mr. Blackton paused and puffed vigorously at his pipe.

"Go on," said Leven.

Mr. Blackton smiled in wry fashion. "The next chapter of the story is not pleasant telling for me; that's why I stopped to take breath," he said; and once more he pulled silently at his pipe for a few moments.

"I held a position of considerable responsibility," he resumed. "The details wouldn't interest you. I was implicitly trusted and had the handling of money. One day my employer told me that I had been detected in a forgery. He was more grieved than angered, and told me to return the money and go my way. He showed me proofs so strong that they actually startled me, innocent though I was. But there is no need to go into that. I had no such sum as was necessary to make good the forgery, even if I had been disposed to acknowledge guilt by doing so. My employer deemed me contumacious. I was arrested, tried, and sent to State's prison."

The young Englishman shivered a little and drew back.

"I have spent the earnings of ten years in disproving the charge," said Mr. Blackton, noticing the movement, "and I have done so to the satisfaction of my former employer and of the governor of the State. That is small consolation for two years spent in

prison, but it has been my one object in life.

"Now, then," he went on slowly, "you wonder why I should tell you all this. The reason is that I discovered, when I set out to clear my name, that the forgery for which I was convicted was committed either by my wife or by her lover with her aid. There was a double play. They robbed my employers and got me safely into prison by the same act. You can understand how I sympathize with you in being made a dupe of that woman and her deviltry."

Leven looked bewildered, amazed, stunned. "My—she has been known to me as Annie, not Laura," he said finally.

"Just so; she is a remarkably clever woman," replied Mr. Blackton, "and in Salt Lake City a week ago for half an hour she actually fooled me into the belief that she was her sister. Let me finish. When I was released from prison I wanted to kill somebody, but when I made inquiries about my wife I found that she had been deserted by the man—her lover—and had died soon after I was sent to prison. Her sister had returned to England."

"She died," exclaimed Leven, mystified; "then how——"

"Wait a bit. I was deceived—every one was deceived—into the belief that she had died. I know now that it was her sister that died, and I have an idea that—this woman"—he hesitated what to call her—"may have made it easy for her sister to die. You understand?"

Leven winced.

"She was afraid of me with good cause. If she was sure of anything in the world, it was that when I got out of prison I would get at the truth and go hunting for her. If she were dead, that would end it. She had no fancy for killing herself—but her sister resembled her—and, well, you understand. Perhaps Annie died a natural death. Whether she did or not, the game was so well played that, until a week ago, I had no idea that this woman was alive."

He paused. Leven's face was haggard.

"Yet you must realize," said the young Englishman at last, "that I have only your word for all this. Consider how strange, how monstrous, it must sound to me——"

"I understand," returned Mr. Blackton. "You have only my word. You have only my word, too, for what happened in Salt Lake last week. Consider that I believed her dead—that for ten years I had no reason to believe otherwise. Consider, too, that she had gone to the length of cutting off a finger in order to perfect the resemblance to her sister——"

"It was crushed in the door of a railway-carriage just before we started to the United States, and had to be amputated," said Leven.

"That is a singular coincidence," admitted Mr. Blackton—"just before you started for the United States? Do you mind telling me," he asked abruptly, "whether she favored this trip?"

A shadow crossed the young man's face. "No," he replied half-unwillingly; "she opposed it."

"And her finger was accidentally crushed just before you left. Hah! You know her hair is not naturally its present color, don't you?"

Leven rose from his chair, walked to the window, and stood there a full minute staring into vacancy. Mr. Blackton smoked on.

When the younger man turned from the window his face was gray. His voice shook.

"Mr. Blackton," he said, "I cannot take your unsupported word—cannot—cannot. Don't you see? I must have other proof——"

He broke off abruptly. Mr. Blackton flushed and turned uneasily in his chair. He knocked the ashes from his pipe and took two or three turns across the floor, as if in indecision. At last he stopped, as one who has made up his mind.

"Well," he said, putting his hand on Leven's shoulder, "I'll have to tell you something that will convince you."

He whispered in the younger man's ear, and doubt, lingering hope, changed to conviction as Leven listened.

"Steady, my boy; steady!" exclaimed

Mr. Blackton, gripping him by the arm and helping him to a chair. "You're not the first man that's had this sort of a deal. You'll get over it. Consider that you have got rid of a devilish, dangerous woman. She's gone. Let her go, and thank God that you're rid of her so easily."

The words roused the other man.

"Yes, yes," he muttered; "she's gone—gone for good. See here," he continued dully, taking a letter from his pocket; "this was sent to me this morning—left by a messenger. She says she is gone for good, as you say."

"What reason does she give?" asked Mr. Blackton.

Leven was silent for a moment; then he said: "I don't think that I ought to tell you the contents of the letter, Mr. Blackton; but this much I will say—that I might have been prepared for your coming by reading it if my wits had not been astray through the worry I have undergone."

"I understand," said Mr. Blackton. "In fact, I think I can pretty nearly give you the substance of what she has written you. Let me see. She has been forced to leave you through fear of some one who has the power to bring accusations against her which she cannot refute, though innocent of any wrong-doing. That's right so far?"

"Substantially so, yes," said Leven, with some surprise.

"She says that appearances may be against her, but declares herself guiltless, and believes there may still be happy times for you together after she has disproved these slanders."

"No," interrupted Leven, "you are wrong; on the contrary, she says that I never will see her again."

"So," reflected Mr. Blackton, "she has found her affinity again in the nick of time."

"I hope," he said aloud, "you mean to humor her in that determination."

Leven thought for a moment. "No," he said firmly, "I can't allow the matter to rest that way. After all, there is a bare possibility of some terrible mistake, and if it should turn out——" He broke off abruptly. "May I ask you to give me your address, Mr. Blackton?" he asked.

Without a word, Mr. Blackton picked up from the table where it was lying the card with his name written upon it. He penciled an address.

"I can reach you by mail or telegraph at this address?" asked Leven.

"Yes, you can reach me there—*if I'm alive*. Life out in this country, you know," he went on, tapping the pencil on the table and speaking gravely, "is uncertain. People get killed here, and little is thought of it unless the circumstances are extraordinary. Shooting a horse-thief or a man who steals your wife is thought to be justifiable. Other provocation is sometimes deemed insufficient.

"However," he said, smiling, and reaching for his hat as he rose to go, "I'm not likely to steal horses or cattle, much less anybody's wife. But life is uncertain. If I'm alive, you will hear of me at that address."

He walked toward the door. As he grasped the knob, Leven advanced to him and held out his hand.

"Good-by, Mr. Blackton," he said; "I know you meant well in coming to me. That your errand was unpleasant was not your fault. It must be enough for you to know that I believe what you have told me, and I hope that we shall soon make an end of this wretched story together. Till we meet again upon that errand, good-by."

Mr. Blackton grasped the extended hand and shook it warmly.

"Yes, yes," he said, moved out of his usual composure, "we shall see the end of it, right enough—or at least I shall—and then you'll forget it all. These things are easier effaced when one is young. You have ten years the advantage of me there. Good-by." And he was gone.

An hour later he startled a Rhode Island jewelry-drummer, who sat beside him in the hotel office, by bringing his fist down heavily on the arm of his chair and exclaiming:

"I will settle the business single-handed and save trouble for every one!"

The drummer hastily got up and moved away.

It was hot out in the sage-brush. The sun was well down in the west, but the plain had been inundated with heat all day, and what with the reflection from the ground and the potency still left in the slanting rays of the day-god, the very air shimmered and quivered with the heat.

A prairie-dog poked his head out of his hole and glanced quickly around, but popped back into his cooler subterranean quarters.

An insect hummed feebly, as if protesting against the oppressiveness of the atmosphere; but, for the most part, the great plateau, broken here and there by ragged gullies and abrupt upheavals of the earth, was silent and desolate.

High up in the air a buzzard sailed lazily in great circles, the only dark spot in the cloudless sky.

In the bed of an arroyo or dry watercourse, crouched against the western bank to gain shelter from the sun, lay a man, his flannel shirt unbuttoned at the neck, and his coat and hat beside him, partially concealing the barrel of a Winchester rifle.

He had lain there for two hours, rising now and then to look sharply down the wagon-trail that showed dimly through the sage-brush to the south.

A prairie rattlesnake squirmed sluggishly over the break of the ground opposite him and slid down into the gully. The man reached out and took hold of the gun by the barrel, and made as if to kill the reptile. Then he thought better of it, and allowed the snake to glide on unmolested.

He lay down again. The prairie-dog once more appeared at the door of his house, and, after three or four feints and dodges, seeing the man lie so quiet, boldly sat up and stared at him for full five minutes, when a movement caused him to turn a somersault and disappear.

The man rose once more and looked down the trail, shading his eyes with his hand. This time he remained standing. Far away—four or five miles, perhaps—he could see a puff of dust. There was no wind, and he knew that the dust must be caused by some one coming along the trail.

He looked again, to assure himself that he was not mistaken, and then picked up his Winchester, saw that the magazine was full of cartridges, gathered up his coat and hat, and moved a little farther down the gully, where the bank was not so high.

Here the trail ran between the arroyo on one side and a steep, shelving bank on the other, leaving barely space for a wagon to pass.

Nearer and nearer came the dust, and at last over a swell of the ground rattled a light ranch-wagon drawn by a span of buckskin ponies that trotted briskly along, utterly impervious to the heat, biting at each other when their driver allowed them to lapse into a walk.

A man, square of jaw and light of hair, his eyes gray, with black points in the center, held the reins; and beside him was a woman of thirty or thirty-five—handsome, brown-haired, well-preserved.

As the ponies neared the narrow place in the road their driver checked them, and at the same moment the man in the arroyo sprang up over the bank, and, standing in the middle of the trail, blocked the way.

"Hands up!" he cried, leveling his rifle at the driver.

"Road-agent, by thunder!" ejaculated that person, pulling at the lines to hold the ponies, which had begun to plunge.

"Hands up!" repeated the man with the rifle.

"Don't you see that I have to hold the bronks, you idiot? Do you think I've four hands?" shouted the driver.

No coward, this fellow, evidently.

"Hold on, there!" he cried, as the woman beside him fainted and almost fell from the wagon. He transferred both reins to his right hand, and supported the woman with his left arm.

"Ain't you ashamed to frighten a woman this way?" he went on; and he hurled a few curses at the man in the road. "I'll give you what money I've

got if I can get the ponies to stand still. Hold the horses, darn you! You can keep me covered just the same."

"Get out of the wagon and lift the woman out," said the man in the road, taking one of the horses by the head. "I want to talk to you."

A stare from the other man culminated in a look of recognition. He still held the reins with one hand and kept the woman from falling with the other.

"Oh, it's you, is it?" he said coolly. "I didn't recognize you as quickly as our friend here did. You've scared her, you see."

"Get out of the wagon!" came the command a second time.

The driver looked hard at the man in the road, and considered a moment. He drew over as far as he could toward his end of the wagon seat, allowing the unconscious woman to lie along the length of it. Then he stood up, having both hands free for the reins, and made a motion as if to step on top of the wheel and jump to the ground.

The other man, holding the horse by the bridle with his left hand, had tired of supporting the rifle with his right arm, and the muzzle of the weapon was deflected toward the ground.

"Get out!" he repeated sharply for the third time. As he spoke the pony plunged viciously. It required all his strength to hold it.

The man in the wagon saw his opportunity. Quickly transfering both reins to his left hand, he seized the whip and lashed the ponies savagely, shouting to them at the same time. They reared and struck out with their forefeet.

The man in the road lost his grip on the bridle and tried to seize it again. The driver shouted and whipped, and the horses dashed forward, almost trampling beneath their feet the other man, who sprang quickly aside, the hub of the wagon scraping him as it whirled past.

He staggered against the bank where he had fallen in the effort to escape the hoofs and wheels, but quickly recovered himself. Stepping into the middle of the road, he hesitated a moment. Then he leveled his rifle at the figure of the man still standing upright in the wagon, which was rattling recklessly down the trail, and fired.

The man wavered, reeled, loosened his grasp on the reins, and pitched out head-first into the road, the hind-wheels of the wagon passing over him. The ponies, still further excited by the report of the gun, raced along to where the road curved to the left. In rounding the bend the wagon slipped and flew outward, over and into the gully that skirted the road on the right.

The horses, by a convulsive spring, freed themselves of the vehicle, and ran furiously onward. The overturned wagon lay in the bottom of the arroyo.

The man with the rifle walked to the place where the other man was lying face downward in the alkali dust. A hole in his back showed where the bullet from the Winchester had hit him, and it needed no close inspection to see that he was dead.

Laying down his rifle in the road, the man clambered down into the ravine, and with much labor and difficulty righted the overturned wagon. Under it lay the woman, also dead, her neck broken in the fall. A tiny stream of blood had started from a wound in her temple, and ran down over her face.

It was nearly sundown. The man climbed to the road again and picked up his gun. As he stood there for a moment, looking toward the west, the waning light brought out strongly a reddish-purple scar on his cheek.

He threw his gun on his shoulder and started off at a swinging pace westward, leaving the dead man lying on his face in the road, and the dead woman staring blankly at the sky from the bed of the dry watercourse.

The lower edge of the sun had just begun to sink below the horizon as the man reached the top of a little hill and paused for a moment, his figure outlined in silhouette against the sky.

Then as he descended the slope on the westward side he seemed to walk right into the dull-red, glowing disk of the sun and disappear.

Soon darkness fell.

The Man Without a Soul

By Charles Kroth Moser

Author of "The Game and the Lady," "At the Hour of the Rat," Etc.

There is no more autocratic person on earth than the "boss" of a mining-town in the West. In this story—one of the best Mr. Moser has written for us—the "boss" is as wild a type of man as you will find anywhere. But even a soulless man will do commendable things, as in this instance

HE evil that men do lives after them; the good is oft interred with their bones," once wrote the immortal William, bard of Avon, and his epigram has since become a platitude. This narrative modestly aims to save from entombment some of the good that resided in Mr. Salvation Jones, whose bones, not more than a spring or two ago, rattled noisily against the branches when the hot north winds swept through the lone cotton-wood-tree that stands by the old Mohave trail just beyond the confines of Gold City.

For when Mr. Salvation Jones' erstwhile cowering subjects—he having been for many months the uncrowned king of the godless little mining city—turned like worms, and in their righteous indignation strung him up 'twixt earth and sky, there was none in all that wild country so sinful as to do reverence to his memory.

But, far away, across the salt seas and up under the shelter of some ice-laden, Swedish peak, there dwelt one humble household that might have wept real tears over his unhallowed end, and said a prayer to the northland gods for the repose of his soul—had it but known. But simple-minded Olaf Swanson and his good wife Lena and their three cotton-haired Svensk children will probably never learn of the fate that befell him, and in their minds he will always be a hero, the noble, brave benefactor who made all their lives happy.

This story, of course, concerns events some time prior to Mr. Salvation Jones' "taking off" and while he was yet the lord of Gold City. Gold City was one of those wonderful California towns that spring up overnight from bitter, barren hills of sand into a teeming city of dusty tents, with hundreds of men, aflame with the thirst for gold, tearing open the bowels of the earth in search of the yellow treasure.

One day it was a hot, boulder-strewn waste of alkali, with here and there a mesquit bush, a clump of cacti, and an occasional ominous thorny-spined giant standing sentinel over the shifting, scoriated sands. On a heap of crumbly, green-gray rock that poked above the sands, a lone man, with streaming yellow hair and patient, placid eyes as blue as his native Norse lakes, wandered, his prospector's pick and drill in his hands.

The next day—and the waste was alive with human forms. Tents sprang up, then shacks and low, brick buildings made from materials drawn by mules over a hundred miles of desert. The wilderness was cut, torn, and tunneled with mines, and men went gold-mad. Banks were opened, saloons flourished like a family of jack-rabbits, and gambling-halls were as the sand-grains, without number.

In short, Gold City became what its name indicated; and as lively a little

bit of hell as any part of the devil's domain.

Its Swede discoverer was kicked off his claim by the powers that established themselves over the new municipality, and his subsequent whereabouts interested them not more than the lizards dozing their lives away in the crevices of the rocks. He went out into the desert again, and they reaped the harvest of his patient prospecting in that land of desolation.

The new city was under the dominion of one Soapy Briggs and his gang of card-sharps, tin horns, and thieves when Mr. Salvation Jones first hit the town. Every one kotowed to Soapy, paid him tribute for living, and "took water" whenever his hand dropped on the butt of his gun. The gang of thugs at his back plundered, blackmailed, murdered as he saw fit; and few men in Gold City dared call their souls their own.

He levied on the dance-halls till he owned half of them and controlled the other half. He gave his orders to the saloons, the dives, the faro-banks, and they obeyed. Soapy Briggs was "boss," and feared like a pestilence for his ruthless deviltry in that wild young town where every man was a law unto himself—or the slave of one stronger than he.

But Salvation Jones was of a different breed. He entered the town unheralded and with no coterie of "peelers" at his back. His first night in, he chanced to drop into a saloon frequented by Briggs and some of his crowd. The boss and his crew were idling at the bar when Jones ordered his poison and threw down the "two bits" necessary for the purchase of a man's-sized drink.

"Blow yourself for th' gang," ordered Soapy insolently, stepping close up to the stranger.

"Go to the devil," responded Jones, with exceeding calmness.

Soapy reached for his gun with all his customary speed, but he never touched it—if the notorious boss was quicker than a rattlesnake, the newcomer was quicker than chain lightning.

His smooth, white left hand darted out swiftly as the flash of a lizard's tongue, and caught itself in Soapy's tousled beard. As he jerked the boss' head down suddenly, his right hand buried a knife in Soapy's jugular.

"Now, you damn curs," he roared, in the voice of a lion, as he stood over the body of his foe, with the knife at his feet and two huge revolvers thrust out from his hands, "come on and fight! I'll take on all of you!"

From that moment Salvation Jones was the new king of Gold City.

By right of his nerve, and the exceeding delicacy of his trigger-finger, Jones inherited most of Soapy Briggs' estate. He came into possession of the gambling dens, the dives, and all the paraphernalia of Soapy's craft.

Best of all, he inherited the gang—every man-jack of them came to swear by Jones and call him master. And if they had marveled at the power and the cruelty of their erstwhile fallen lord, they positively cringed at the very thought of Salvation Jones. Whom he did not like he punished according to his whim. If a man stood in his way he shot him down; if a man spilled his liquor at table with Jones, he was likely to feel the sudden sting of steel between his ribs. A complaining word was answered with a blow from the butt of a gun; oaths—they were not even thought of in the presence of the king.

No man knew where Salvation Jones came from—when one had once looked into his opaque-gray eyes, with their trick of suddenly expanding the pupils into pools of horrible depth, no man cared. But he ruled with a rod of iron, indulgent only when the mood seized him, and then to a lavish excess, and he respected neither gods nor demons, nor women nor dogs—only himself.

He cherished no pets, either male or female, human or beast. But those whom he commanded, and who obeyed him blindly, he sometimes literally squandered money and favors upon; like a despot rewarding his slaves, and with no more apparent tenderness. In time, those who came to know him called him the "Man Without a Soul."

Jones came by his first name characteristically. Whenever called upon to do so, he had always signed himself Adrian C. Jones, until the day a wandering band of street-preachers came into the town earnestly seeking souls to save.

"Salvation is free!" cried the preachers that night in the street as they stood under their flaring torches.

"No, it ain't!" yelled back Jones, shouldering his way into their midst. "Not in Gold City. You've got to earn yours. Dance some!"

His pistols spat holes in the sand around their feet and the preachers danced; danced as only good old Methodist stock can, in a good cause. But then Jones ordered the hat passed, and the collection amply paid for the performance.

Thereafter some venturesome spirit dared to call the boss "Salvation Jones," and the name stuck—for his singularly whimsical nature was pleased with the sound of it, and he accepted it.

One of the boss' favorite methods of acquiring wealth was to jump another man's mining-claim—whenever the opportunity offered itself, or he could invent the merest pretense to legal right. For Jones kept his hand constantly on the pulse of his restive subjects, and knew that in the matter of claim-jumping it was dangerous even for him to "go too far."

Miners sell their lives dearly in defense of their "location," and it was only some gold-digger more stupid than the rest—whom he could swindle out of his claim—or one who had let some tiny legal injunction as to necessary work done go by default, whom he could rob. But the stupid and the negligent suffered from Jones; they were generally far too weak to defend themselves from him and his gang of rascals. For such incompetents he had his hirelings constantly on the lookout.

One day "Chuck" Gompers, his bartender and faithful henchman, halted Jones before the refreshment-stand of the Good Cheer saloon and tipped him off to an easy layout.

"Say, Mr. Jones," said Chuck, as he wiped the bar with a gunny-sack, "I think I've got next to somethin' soft. You've heard of that square-head what located this town, an' couldn't keep his fool mouth shut about it long enough to make his pile. He struck th' yaller stuff right on th' spot where the Orison mine is now, an' it was all his'n to th' good. But when th' rush comes an' th' push gets here, Soapy Briggs kicks th' stuffin' out of th' Swede an' swipes his claim.

"Well, that Swede's gone out on the desert, an' he's located hisself somewheres in Dry Bones Cañon. But I reckon he's done learned to keep his fly-trap closed; he comes in here 'bout once in every two months to get grub—but he ain't shootin' off his face none no more. Nary a yawp. Now, I figgers as how that there square-head's got a hole sunk somewheres out there in them rocks, an' is just pawin' out th' dust in handfuls. Else why is he hangin' on to her so quiet an' peacefullike? Tell me, eh? That's what I say."

"You reckon he hasn't got her located and filed all properlike, nor nothing like that?" Salvation Jones asked his bartender with gentle sarcasm.

"Sure he has. But say, his conk's as soft as cheese—no more brains 'n a toad. It'd be like takin' candy from a kid. Seems to me, on th' square, as how 'twould be worth while takin' a lope out there an' seein,' anyhow; 'tain't more'n twenty mile up into the Slates—an' th' trail ain't noways crowded," Chuck added significantly. "I'll bet he's got a hunk o' dust cached away that's bigger'n a keg o' steam beer."

The boss pondered his hireling's words for some little time, asked a few more questions, and finally made up his mind:

"I guess I will pay Mr. Square-head a little visit just for luck. Maybe he's gettin' sort of lonely out there, and needs a pardner. Well, if he's got a nugget anywheres around as big as my thumb, we'll just sort of annex it for the general good. Man's got no business not dividin' his luck with his friends, nohow."

Mr. Salvation Jones' buckskin-colored cayuse hit the trail with him to Dry Bones Cañon the very next day. Together they wriggled and twisted over the bare rocks and through the parched chaparral until, at last, a scant hour or two before sunset, the tempest-scarred shoulder of the Slate Mountains shunted off abruptly into the ragged gorge they were seeking.

It was a country forsaken of God and all living things save only the reptiles and the rodents of the desert. The hot winds swirled in crazy currents around the boulders; they whisked tons of the biting, acrid alkali from the flat face of the valley, and sprinkled it in a whitish, blistering powder over the hills and into the crevices of the brown earth. At a distance the piled alkali looked like drifts of snow.

A few scraggy, stunted bushes clung weakly to the sides of the cañon, too thin to hide the grimness of the bald, outcropping rocks, and too shriveled in the heat of the sun to shelter even a bird among their dry stems. Salvation Jones had thought the landscape about Gold City desolate enough to be the abode of the damned, but when his gaze fell upon the sordid scenery of Dry Bones Cañon, he admitted to himself that its name but feebly described it.

Well knowing that any human habitation in that infernal dead land would be squatted along the watercourse, Jones followed the muggish imitation of a brook that trickled along the bottom of the cañon.

He turned the sharp angle of a projecting crag about half a mile up its course, and found himself face to face with the queerest shanty that was ever called the home of man.

Snuggled in the shadow of a huge boulder, four manzanita poles stood upright to form the skeleton of a house; four others were laid across them at the top, and the roof, slanting from front to back, was a thatch of dried mesquit stems, cactus leaves, and Spanish bayonet.

Gunny-sacks sewed together and patched in spots formed the four walls. There was no door, but a flap in the gunny-sack walls served the purpose of one.

Close beside the sagging flap a hole had been dug into the earth, and flat stones mud-chinked into it to form a rude oven. The remains of a five-gallon oil-can, with top and bottom knocked out, stuck upright from the hole as a chimney. Beside the rusty tin chimney sat a coffee-pot of sooty mien, a frying-pan, and a kettle. The settler evidently did his cooking out of doors.

Jones raised the flap and peered into the darkness of the cabin. He heard a faint, rustling noise, and three pairs of tiny, glittering eyes gazed at him from out of the darkness. He heard the scurrying movement of tiny feet, the soft beating of wings, and the eyes disappeared.

"Hello!" Jones called out to the pile of blankets he dimly discerned on the floor in a corner. There was no answer; the Swede was not at home.

Gold City's nervy boss stepped inside and struck a match. Never in his life had Salvation Jones felt a tremor of fear, but the complete desolation of the place made him feel foolish.

He looked in vain for what he would have called furniture. The pile of blankets in the corner, two or three cob pipes lying against the gunny-sack walls, and a collection of canned "grub" in another corner, seemed to complete the cabin's equipment.

Another match showed him a side of bacon, some paper sacks that looked as if they might be filled with beans and coffee, and a few dirt-stained garments hanging from the thatched roof. Tied to the gunny-sack wall, with two stirrups of pack-thread, was a broken piece of looking-glass.

Also, as he looked this time, he saw a couple of pewter forks, some tin plates and cups, and a sack of tobacco lying near the blankets. That was absolutely all, and the dry, earthen floor sent up a smother of dust as his feet moved.

As he passed out through the tent-flap he heard a man's voice singing;

the voice seemed coming down the brook. Soon its owner hove in sight, and Salvation Jones knew he stood in the presence of the Swede, whose "conk was softer'n cheese."

"How!" said Jones pleasantly.

"Ay ban vall," responded the short, shaggy-bearded Swede stolidly.

Jones studied him; he was indeed as wooden-headed as a nutmeg. It was too easy—if he had anything worth while.

"I'm prospectin'—lost—tired—hungry," said Jones. "You give me grub, bunk—and feed my bronco?"

"Vall. Ay not ban have mooch. You pay?"

"No." Jones was astounded that a man in the desert country should ask pay for feeding a stranger.

"Vall. Har not ban goot. All right; har no mattar. Ay not ban vant var minesel-uf—var Lena." He said this as if he expected Jones to thoroughly understand. But Jones did not; he had never heard of Lena.

"My name is Salvation Jones," he explained, as the Swede turned unceremoniously toward the cabin. It would be well to impress this simple-minded creature from the start; such people are easily conquered by the force of a great name. But the Swede was invulnerable. He turned serenely.

"Ay not ban know har," he said.

As he entered the shanty he flung the flap wide and fastened it open with a nail, so that the last rays of the fading sun lay lightly across the dusty brown floor. Even as he fastened the flap, the Swede's lips opened and emitted a low, coaxing call, as gentle as the croon of a dove:

"Co-hee! Co-hee! Co-hee!"

At the first syllable Jones heard the soft flutter of wings, a scamper, and the squeak of some little animal voicing its delight. The next instant a great gray owl swooped out of the cabin and settled on the Swede's shoulder; a red ground-squirrel ran nimbly up his trousers-leg and hid itself in a pocket of his overalls. Then a long, ungainly jack-rabbit came hopping out, whiffling shyly with its dainty pink nose; it couched itself between the man's feet. Not one of the strange trio took the least notice of Jones.

"Well, I'll be——! Is that your family?" exclaimed the astonished boss.

"Yah. Har ban may famblay," said the man, his eyes lighting up with pride.

It had been Salvation Jones' plan to eat with the Swede and spend the night with him. He relied on his own acumen and ability at "pumping" to discover before he left the next day where the stupid fellow's claim was, how much it paid, and where he had cached the gold he had already taken from it.

There are more ways than one of persuading a man to give up such secrets. Jones commenced his campaign as they sat eating the frugal supper of beans, bacon, coffee, and sour bread; they sat on stones around the oven, while the owl perched on Olaf's shoulder, the red squirrel sat on its haunches upon Olaf's knee, and the rabbit hopped around sniffing at the pot and frying-pan.

"I s'pose you've been prospectin' around this country a pretty long time, eh, Swanson?" he remarked, in the insinuating tone that invites a confidence the words do not ask.

Salvation Jones, for all his hard, cruel countenance, inspired confidence—when he chose to exert himself. His huge, lionlike head, with the opaque, inscrutable eyes; the great brown mane that flowed over his neck and breast; the wide, powerful shoulders, deep chest, and white, smooth, cruel hands, somehow seemed to fascinate men, and caused them to yield to the power his physical attributes indicated, as his mental characteristics also.

Simple Ole Swanson fell under the spell; he did not answer at first, and Jones repeated his question:

"You must have been prospectin' round these hills long enough to get a pile of dust by this time, eh, Swanson?"

"Yah, Ay ban dis har countree saven yar. Ay lave har old countree undt mine pooty vifes Lena undt Olé undt

Gretta undt mine leetle Sven—undt Ay coom har to saak har gelt. Ay ban have mooch troubles. Bad mans hay steal may gelt; more bad mans hay soak my fa-ace. Now Ay coom this place more as two yar. Ay sav' da money—by-by Ay go soon, now."

"Gettin' to be a pretty rich man, eh, Ole?"

"Vall, Ay tell Lena vhan Ah get ten t'ousan' thaler Ay coom home. Ay tank Ay ban get har pooty soon."

This was interesting news. Jones wanted more of it; he would not scare off his victim by going after it too eagerly, though. He talked to the dense Svensk about his home country, his family.

"I s'pose Lena's your wife, eh? And the others your kids?" he asked.

Ole's mild-blue eyes clouded for a few moments, and something very like moisture glistened under their lashes. Then he put up a hand and stroked the ruffled feathers of the big gray owl; the squirrel chattered his tiny jealousy and scrambled up into the loose folds of Ole's shirt, from which he thrust his head out now and then to see if the owl was still getting all the coddling.

"Hay ban may vife undt baby," said the slow voice. "Ay not see har var saven yar. But"—and he pulled the owl down against his cheek—"Ay tank maype Ay have 'em har. Hay owl Ay call har Gretta; har may leetle garl. Hay owl hay not ban leetle garl-owl, but hay ban so schmart so mooch as Gretta. Har squirrel ban leetle Sven; cause har eyes ban so bright an' har so cute. Ay tank Ole ban har yack-rabbit, 'cause hay ban not know mooch. They ban all may garl undt leetle mans. They ban mooch love var Ay."

Salvation Jones suddenly found a closeness in his throat that had never been there before. To think of this poor, stupid Swede naming a rabbit, a squirrel, and an owl after his children, and living with them in the California desert. Something about the idea appealed to him.

"And which is Lena?"

Ole shook his head sadly.

"Har ban only *one* Lena. Har ban may vife. Ay not have no odder Lenas. Har ban may vife. Ay tank Ay get ten t'ousan' thaler soon an' go see Lena."

Ole would talk no more about it, and Jones did not urge him. That night he watched the Swede make a bed of gunny-sacking for the rabbit; he saw the squirrel and the owl sleep together in the same hole in the shanty floor, and he heard the lonely, shaggy-maned man say a simple Norse prayer for Lena and Ole and Gretta and little Sven. But when he tagged onto the end of his petition a childlike little plea in broken English that the God of mercies would watch over and protect his beloved pets, the owl and the squirrel and the rabbit—Jones turned over in his roll of blankets and swore.

"The damn cuss has got on my nerves," he said to himself.

In the morning, when he heaved himself out of the blankets, with every muscle stiff from lying on the ground, he heard Ole clanking the coffee-pot against the oven; he was preparing breakfast.

Jones opened the flap to step out; the big owl swooped down on his shoulder and nestled its head in his beard; and the squirrel clambered up his body till it reached his vest pocket.

"Com' har, you Gretta undt Sven," commanded the voice of their foster-father. "She iss a impoliteness." But Jones held the little pets in his hands.

At breakfast, Swanson's "famblay" divided their attentions between their master and his guest—the remarkable thing to Jones was that these wild things should trust him so when he was a stranger. He did not understand that as Ole was the only human they had ever seen they feared no others more than him. The soulless Salvation watched them feed out of his own hands; the gentlest task his hands had ever known.

"Hell!" he ejaculated, so fiercely that even the owl peered at him as if hurt.

He was a man of few words, and the expletive was the expression of his strongest emotions.

When the coffee and bacon had dis-

appeared, and they had smoked a pipe together, Ole arose and kicked the kitchen utensils into a pile beside the oven.

"Vall, Ay tank Ay coom to har vork now," he said, turning, as if to leave his guest and go to his daily labor. Then in a burst of confidence—"Tank you like to see may claim, Yones? Har a beauty. You vant to see har?"

"Yes—*no!*" Salvation Jones answered almost roughly. Why, he could not tell, unless it was that little Sven, the red squirrel, was climbing around his shoulder in a most disconcerting manner.

"Ay like you see har claim; har got mooch gelt," the Swede insisted persuasively.

"No, I don't want to see it, you dern fool! I've got to be travelin' now, anyhow. By Glory! I think you're the dernedest fool in this county, Ole, to want to show your claim to anybody."

"Yah. Ay tank Ay ban so. Vall, so-long, Mistar Yones."

The Swede disappeared up the creek, and Jones cinched his pony up for his ride back to Gold City. Ole's "family" gathered about him, uttering their good-bys each in its little dumb fashion.

"So-long, Ole and Gretta—and little Sven," Salvation Jones called back to them as he rode down the trail.

"The Swede's got nothin'," he told Chuck, over the Good Cheer's bar. "He ain't worth botherin' with."

Ole tied the precious sack, with its ten thousand dollars' worth of gold-dust stuffing it to the very mouth, to the pack-saddle of his burro and said good-by to his queer little shanty of gunny-sacks and cactus thatch.

His serene blue eyes were filled with tears when he fondled his "famblay" for the last time, but he scattered all his grub, except enough to last him into Gold City, on the ground for them, and left them busily engaged in devouring it. Then he led his burro down the trail toward Gold City and the little far-away cottage in Sweden.

In the busy mining-town Ole sold his burro to a trader, and, shouldering the precious sack, started away to find a bank. The stage did not leave until the next morning, and he knew he must put that sack of ore in some safe place—if he wished ever to get back to Lena and the children with it. But where would he find a bank? Anybody might have told him, but the poor Swede was shy in town; he was not used to all the noise and turmoil, and the strange faces.

Ah, a happy thought! He would ask the bartender in the Good Cheer saloon where his treasure would be safe, The bartender was his friend. Many times he had bought a draft of raw spirits from the sleek-looking gentleman who presided over the Good Cheer's refreshment-stand; and once even that gentleman had done him the honor to drink with him. He would direct him to a bank.

When Chuck saw Ole with his sack come through the door he developed a marvelous fondness for the Swede, greeted him like a long-lost brother, and gave a prodigiously sly, dry wink to the several men who were loafing in the place. Immediately the men filed out of the saloon through a rear door.

"Why sure, sir," said Chuck to Ole. "Sure I can tell you where to keep it. Why, we have a bank connected with this place. Yes, sir, that back door there connects with the private office of th' president. An' he's a friend of mine. If you'd like, I can go in an' see him an' fix it so's you'll have no trouble 't all. Oh, that's all right! Have another, on me."

Leaving Ole serenely happy in having found a friend who would help him, Chuck went in to see his friend, the bank "president." He returned in a moment.

"It's all right, Mr.—let's see?—oh, Mr. Swanson. Yes, Mr. Swanson, my friend the president says he will be glad to see you and give your dust his personal attention. He'll be ready to do business with you in 'bout a minute or two, an' I'll take you in an' introduce you. Have another on me while you're waitin'."

They "had" several more on Chuck, and the simple Swede, much mellowed by this time, was then led like a lamb to the slaughter, into the private office of the "president."

A venerable, benevolent-looking old man, wearing a long gray beard, a flowing white wig, and a huge pair of dark glasses, sat behind a rude wooden partition, much like the ticket-booth at a country railway-station. Through the aperture, not large enough to admit a man's body, he smiled benignly at Ole as Chuck introduced him as the "president," and extended a smooth, singularly muscular hand for so old a man.

"We are very glad to see you, Mr. Swanson," he said kindly. "Any friend of Mr. Gompers is a friend of ours, and we shall take good care of your gold-dust, you may be sure. Just pass it through the window, and I will write you out a receipt."

Guileless as a pigeon, Ole passed the sack through the window; he suddenly saw the moving shadows of two other men standing at the side of the "president," but concealed from his sight by the wooden partition. A strange suspicion shot through his simple mind, and, hardly thinking what he was doing, he held on to the heavy sack by its mouth, while its lower end dropped out of sight.

"Let go, I'll take care of it," said the "president" sharply. His tones were too eager; Ole became frightened, and started to pull his precious ore back again.

"Let it go, I say," cried the old man angrily. "Don't you see I've got it? Let go!"

"Vait! Vait! Ay tank——"

The heavy sack of ore suddenly felt light as a feather in his hand. He raised it up. It was empty! The bottom gaped open, where it had been cut and the ore allowed to run out into another sack.

"Ach, mine Gott! Mistar, *please* ban give may har ten t'ousand thaler. Ay vant may ten t'ousand thaler! Ay vant——"

"My good friend, don't you see you haven't any ten thousand dollars. Why, you can see for yourself, your sack's empty. You're drunk, that's all. What do you mean, coming into our bank intoxicated? Don't you trifle with——"

"Ay vant may money. *Please! You* took har; Ay ban——"

"*I* took your money? Do you mean to insult me? Boys, throw this drunken Swede out of here."

In an instant the two men, concealed until now, rushed out and fell upon the poor Swede. They knocked him down, kicked him almost into insensibility, and then, carrying him by neck and heels, threw him out into a side alley. Here they bestowed on him a few parting kicks and disappeared.

When Ole, battered and bruised, and with the blood trickling down his face, got to his feet he was so dazed he did not know where the saloon was, nor the bank, nor even himself. All he knew was that his ten t'ousand thaler was gone—and with it Lena and Gretta and Ole and little Sven! There was no use trying to get it back; it was gone. Like all the meek men of his type, he was helpless; too dazed to think how he could recover it. He never thought of fighting back. Besides, the spirit had been beaten out of him.

He still had enough gold in his pockets for his trip and his humble expenses—but it was no use trying to go home now. He simply gave up. An hour or more he spent wandering around the hot, sand-blown streets. Occasionally he went into a saloon, tried to ease his grief with beer, and to all who would listen he told his tale.

But one and all they laughed at him. Nothing but a drunken Swede with a drunken yarn to tell! There were lots of them going around every day.

Finally, in a saloon where a dozen men were seated around three little tables, playing pedro, he was rehearsing his woes to the unfeeling bartender. No one paid much attention to him; Ole's grief overcame him as it had before, and putting his head on the bar he sobbed aloud.

"Ay von't see Lena any more. Ay not ban go to har undt Gretta undt leetle Sven!"

Mr. Salvation Jones, sitting at a table, looked up suddenly; he had caught the words, and noticed Ole for the first time. He left the game, and went over to the sobbing Swede.

"What's the trouble, Swanson?" he said, so kindly that the bartender's eyes bulged.

Once more Ole repeated his tale, but with particulars. Salvation Jones gathered the whole story. His opaque-gray eyes began to glow; in a moment they were red with fury.

"You come with me," he said, and took the Swede by the arm. "I'll get your money." They went into the Good Cheer—Jones' own saloon.

"Where's this man's sack of dust?" Jones shouted to Chuck, in his great roaring voice. The bartender thought he was bluffing.

"Money?" said Chuck, in feigned surprise. "Why, he never had no money, Mr. Jones. He's drunk—that's what's the matter with him."

Salvation Jones made a terrible leap at the bartender, and laid Chuck's scalp open with the muzzle of his revolver.

"By the Lord! I'll show you whether he's drunk or not. Where's his dust? Quick, or I'll knock your brains out!"

"The president's got it," screamed Chuck, frightened and amazed.

Salvation Jones dived through the back door. The "president" was still sitting at the aperture, laughing and joking with two men who were "hefting" something between them.

"A bully haul," the "president" was saying through his long gray beard. "The old tub-head——" He looked into the blazing, uncanny eyes of Salvation Jones, boss and master-devil of Gold City.

"Where's this man's money? Blow back with it, *pronto!*"

"Why, Mr. Jones," said the "president," winking at him with soothing and mirthful intent; he, too, thought the boss was bluffing, "don't you know the gentleman is laboring under a hallucination——"

"You mean *you* are, you damned thief!" Jones' great hand shot out, and with one sweep tore wig, goggles, and whiskers from the benevolent-looking "president's" countenance. With the next gesture he caught the benevolent throat in his fingers, and hurled his right fist into the middle of the benign features.

"Blow back with it, I say—or I'll kill you! Blow back *now!*"

He exerted his tremendous strength, and pulled the "president's" head through the aperture. With almost demoniac fury he began to beat it against the wooden partition, while the blood from it ran down through his fingers. The two men inside realized he was actually beating the "president" to death. They came outside with the sack in their hands. Jones saw them, dropped the head he was battering, and rushed for them. But the terrified men let the sack fall to the floor, and sprang through the door leading into the alley.

Jones started after them. There was murder in his face; but suddenly he gained control of himself. He came back, picked up the ore, and placed it in Ole's hands.

"There's your ten thousand dollars," he said, breathing hard, while his eyes seemed to contract and expand with each breath. "I bet it'll be safe now."

They went back to the bar. Jones handed the sack over to Chuck.

"You take care of this till this man wants it," Salvation Jones ordered. "And for every grain of it that's missing when he calls for it, I'll tear off a piece of your hide. You savvy?"

Chuck "savvied." Ole Swanson's dust was as safe in the middle of the street, from that moment, as it would have been in a government vault.

As Ole mounted the stage the next day, on his way back to Sweden, Mr. Salvation Jones, the boss and master-devil of Gold City, stood in the doorway of the Good Cheer watching his departure.

"So-long, Ole," he called out. "Say 'How!' to Lena and Gretta and little Sven—for me."

It was but one incident in the wild career of the Man Without a Soul—the career which ended in a tree-top!

Garrison's Finish

By W. B. M. Ferguson

Author of "'Sissy' Jones and 213," "The Third Degree," Etc.

The slight young fellow who bends over the neck of his horse and flashes past us on the race track does not usually interest us outside his position in the picture, but in Mr. Ferguson's graphic story little Billy Garrison, the jockey, is a man like the rest of us, and his life on and off the track is intensely interesting. The second part of the story will appear in the November issue.

(In Two Parts.—Part I.)

CHAPTER I.

AS he made his way out of the paddock Garrison carefully tilted his bag of Durham into the curved rice-paper held between nicotin-stained finger and thumb, then deftly rolled his "smoke" with the left thumb and forefinger, while tying the bag with practised right hand and even white teeth. Once his reputation had been as spotless as those teeth.

He smiled cynically as he shouldered his way through the slowly moving crowd—that kaleidoscope of the humanities which congregate but do not blend; which coagulate wherever the trial of science, speed, and stamina serves as an excuse for putting fortune to the test.

It was a cynical crowd, a quiet crowd, a sullen crowd. Those who had won, through sheer luck, bottled their joy until they could give it vent in a safer atmosphere—one not so resentful. For it had been a hard day for the field. The favorite beaten in the stretch, choked off, outside the money——

Garrison gasped as the rushing simulacra of the Carter Handicap surged to his beating brain; that brain at bursting pressure. It had recorded so many things—recorded faithfully so many, many things he would give anything to forget.

He was choking, smothering—smothering with shame, hopelessness, despair. He must get away; get away to breathe, to think; get away out of it all; get away anywhere—oblivion.

To the jibes, the sneers flung at him, the innuendos, the open insults, and, worst of all, the sad look of those few friends who gave their friendship without conditions, he was not indifferent though he seemed so. God knows how he felt it all. And all the more so because he had once been so high. Now his fall was so low, so pitifully low; so contemptible, so complete.

He knew what the action of the Jockey Club would be. The stewards would do only one thing. His license would be revoked. To-day had seen his finish. This, the ten-thousand-dollar Carter Handicap, had seen his final slump to the bottom of the scale. Worse. It had seen him a pauper, ostracized; an unclean thing in the mouth of friend and foe alike. The sporting world was through with him at last. And when the sporting world *is* through——

Again Garrison laughed harshly,

puffing at his cigarette, dragging its fumes into his lungs in a fierce desire to finish his physical cataclysm with his moral. Yes, it had been his last chance. He, the popular idol, had been going lower and lower in the scale, but the sporting world had been loyal, as it always is to "class." He had been "class," and they had stuck to him.

Then when he began to go back—— No; worse. Not that. They said he had gone crooked. That was it. Crooked as Doyers Street they said; throwing every race; standing in with his owner to trim the bookies, and they couldn't stand for that. Sport was sport. But they had been loyal. They had warned, implored, begged. What was the use soaking a pile by dirty work? Why not ride straight—ride as he could, as he did, as it had been bred in him to? Any money, any honor was his. Instead——

Garrison, stung to madness by retrospect, humped his way through the crowd at the gates to the Aqueduct. There was not a friendly eye in that crowd. He stuffed his ears with indifference. He would not hear their remarks as they recognized him. He summoned all his nerve to look them in the face unflinchingly—that nerve that had been frayed to ribbons.

And then he heard quick footsteps behind him; a hand was laid heavily on his shoulder, and he was twisted about like a chip. It was his stable owner, his face flushed with passion and drink. Waterbury was stingy of cash but not of words.

"I've looked for you," he whipped out venomously, his large hands ravenous for something to rend. "Now I've caught you. Who was in with you on that dirty deal? Answer, you cur! Spit it out before the crowd. Was it me? Was it me?" he reiterated in a frenzy, taking a step forward for each word, his bad grammar coming equally to the fore.

The crowd surged back. Owner and jockey were face to face. "When thieves fall out!" they thought; and they waited for the fun. Something was due them. It came in a flash. Waterbury shot out his big fist and little Garrison thumped on the turf with a bang, a thin streamer of blood threading its way down his gray-white face.

"You miserable little whelp!" howled his owner. "You've dishonored me. You threw that race, damn you! That's what I get for giving you a chance when you couldn't get a mount anywhere." His long pent-up venom was unleashed. "You threw it. You've tried to make me party to your dirty work—me, me, me!"—he thumped his heaving chest. "But you can't heap your filth on me. I'm done with you. You're a thief, a cur——"

"Hold on," cut in Garrison. He had risen slowly, and was dabbing furtively at his nose with a silk red-and-blue handkerchief—the Waterbury colors.

"Just a minute," he added, striving to keep his voice from sliding the scale. He was horribly calm, but his gray eyes were quivering as was his lip. "I didn't throw it. I—I didn't throw it. I was sick. I—I've been sick. I—I——" Then, for he was only a boy with a man's burdens, his lip began to quiver pitifully; his voice shrilled out and his words came tumbling forth like lava; striving to make up by passion and reiteration what they lacked in logic and coherency. "I'm not a thief. I'm not. I'm honest. I don't know how it happened. Everything became a blur in the stretch. You—you've called me a liar, Mr. Waterbury. You've called me a thief. You struck me. I know you can lick me," he shrilled. "I'm dishonored—down and out. I know you can lick me, but, by the Lord, you'll do it here and now! You'll fight me. I don't like you. I never liked you. I don't like your face. I don't like your hat, and here's your damn colors in your face." He fiercely crumpled the silk handkerchief and pushed it swiftly into Waterbury's glowering eye.

Instantly there was a mix-up. The crowd was blood-hungry. They had paid for sport of some kind. There would be no crooked work in this deal. Lustfully they watched. Then the inequality of the boy and the man was

at length borne in on them, and it roused their stagnant sense of fair play.

Garrison, a small hell let loose, had risen from the turf for the third time; his face a smear of blood, venom, and all the bandit passions. Waterbury, the gentleman in him soaked by the taint of a foisted dishonor and his fighting blood roused, waited with clenched fists. As Garrison hopped in for the fourth time, the older man feinted quickly, and then swung right and left savagely.

The blows were caught on the thick arm of a tan box-coat. A big hand was placed over Waterbury's face and he was given a shove backward. He staggered for a ridiculously long time, and then, after an unnecessary waste of minutes, sat down. The tan overcoat stood over him. It was Jimmy Drake, and the chameleonlike crowd applauded.

Jimmy was a popular book-maker with educated fists. The crowd surged closer. It looked as if the fight might change from bantam-heavy to heavy-heavy. And the odds were on Drake.

"If yeh want to fight kids," said the book-maker, in his slow, drawling voice, "wait till they're grown up. Mebbe then yeh'll change your mind."

Waterbury was on his feet now. He let loose some vitriolic verbiage, using Drake as the objective-point. He told him to mind his own business, or that he would make it hot for him. He told him that Garrison was a thief and cur; and that he would have no book-maker and tout——

"Hold on," said Drake. "You're gettin' too flossy right there. When you call me a tout you're exceedin' the speed limit." He had an uncomfortably steady blue eye and a face like a snow-shovel. "I stepped in here not to argue morals, but to see fair play. If Billy Garrison's done dirt, and I admit it looks close like it, I'll bet that your stable, either trainer or owner, shared the mud-pie, all right——"

"I've stood enough of those slurs," cried Waterbury, in a frenzy. "You lie."

Instantly Drake's large face stiffened like cement, and his overcoat was on the ground as quickly.

"That's a fighting word where I come from," he said grimly.

But before Drake could square the insult a crowd of Waterbury's friends swirled up in an auto, and half a dozen peacemakers, mutual acquaintances, together with two somnambulistic policemen, managed to preserve the remains of the badly shattered peace. Drake sullenly resumed his coat, and Waterbury was driven off, leaving a back draft of impolite adjectives and vague threats against everybody. The crowd drifted away. It was a fitting finish for the scotched Carter Handicap.

Meanwhile, Garrison, taking advantage of the switching of the lime-light from himself to Drake, had dodged to oblivion in the crowd.

"I guess I don't forget Jimmy Drake," he mused grimly to himself. "He's straight cotton. The only one who didn't give me the double-cross out and out. Bud, Bud!" he deplored to himself, "this is sure the wind-up. You've struck bed-rock and the tide's coming in—hard. You're all to the weeds. Buck up, buck up," he growled savagely, in fierce contempt. "What're you dripping about?" He had caught a tear burning its way to his eyes—eyes that had never blinked under Waterbury's savage blows. "What if you *are* ruled off? What if you *are* called a liar and crook; thrown the game to soak a pile? What if you *couldn't* get a clothes-horse to run in a potato-race? Buck up, buck up and plug your croton pipe. They say you're a crook. Well, *be* one. Show 'em you don't care a damn. You're down and out, anyway. What's honesty, anyway, but whether you got the goods or ain't? Shake the bunch. Get out before you're kicked out. Open a pool-room like all the has-beens and trim the suckers right, left, and down the middle. Money's the whole thing. Get it. Don't mind how you do, but just get it. You'll be honest enough for ten men then. Anyway, there's no one cares a curse how you pan out——"

He stopped, and his face slowly relaxed. The hard, vindictive look slowly faded from his narrowed eyes.

"Sis," he said softly. "Sis—I was going without saying good-by. Forgive me."

He swung on his heel, and with hunched shoulders made his way back to the Aqueduct. Waterbury's training-quarters were adjacent, and, after lurking furtively about like some hunted animal, Garrison summoned all his nerve and walked boldly in.

The only stable-boy about was one with a twisted mouth and flaming red hair, which he was always curling; a remarkably thin youth he was, addicted to green sweaters and sentimental songs. He was singing one now in a key entirely original with himself. "Red's" characteristic was that when happy he wore a face like a tombstone. When sad, the sentimental songs were always in evidence.

"Hello, Red!" said Garrison gruffly. He had been Red's idol once. He was quite prepared now, however, to see the other side of the curtain. He was no longer an idol to any one.

"Hello!" returned Red non-commitally.

"Where's Crimmins?"

"In there." Red nodded to the left where were situated the stalls. "Gettin' Sis ready for the Belmont opening."

"Riding for him now?"

"Yeh. Promised a mount in th' next run-off. 'Bout time, I guess."

There was silence. Garrison pictured to himself the time when he had won his first mount. How long ago that was! Time is reckoned by events, not years. How glorious the future had seemed! He slowly seated himself on a box by the side of Red and laid a hand on the other's thin leg.

"Kid," he said, and his voice quivered, "you know I wish you luck. It's a great game—the greatest game in the world, if you only play it right." He blundered to silence as his own condition surged over him.

Red was knocking out his shabby heels against the box in an agony of confusion. Then he grew emboldened by the other's dejected mien. "No, I'd never throw no race," he said judicially. "It don't pay——"

"Red," broke in Garrison harshly, "you don't believe I threw that race? Honest, I'm square. Why, I was up on Sis—Sis whom I love, Red—honest, I was sure of the race. Dead sure. I hadn't much money, but I played every cent I had on her. I lost more than any one. I lost—everything. See," he ran on feverishly, glad of the opportunity to vindicate himself, if only to a stable-boy, "I guess the stewards will let the race stand, even if Waterbury does kick. Rogue won square enough."

"Yeh, because yeh choked Sis off in th' stretch. She could ha' slept home a winner, an' yeh know it, Billy," said Red, with sullen regret.

There was a time when he never would have dared to call Garrison by his Christian name. Disgrace is a great leveler. Red grew more conscious of his own rectitude.

"I ain't knockin' yeh, Billy," he continued, speaking slowly, to lengthen the pleasure of thus monopolizing the pulpit. "What have I to say? Yeh can ride rings round any jockey in the States—at least, yeh *could*." And then, like his kind, Red having nothing to say, proceeded to say it.

"But it weren't your first thrown race, Billy. Yeh know that. I know how yeh doped it out. I know we ain't got much time to make a pile if we keep at th' game. Makin' weight makes yeh a lunger. We all die of th' hurry-up stunt. An' yeh're all right to your owner so long's yeh make good. After that it's twenty-three, forty-six, double time for yours. I know what th' game is when you've hit th' top of th' pile. It's a fast mob, an' yeh got to keep up with th' band-wagon. You're makin' money fast and spendin' it faster. Yeh think it'll never stop comin' your way. Yeh dip into everythin'. Then yeh wake up some day without your pants, and yeh breeze about to make th' coin again. There's a lot of wise eggs handin' out crooked advice—they take the coin and you th' big stick. Yeh know, neither Crimmins or the Old Man was

in on your deals, but yeh had it all framed up with outside guys. Yeh bled the field to soak a pile. See, Bill," he finished eloquently, "it weren't your first race."

"I know, I know," said Garrison grimly. "Cut it out. You don't understand, and it's no good talking. When you *have* reached the top of the pile, Red, you'll travel with as fast a mob as I did. But I never threw a race in my life. That's on the level. Somehow I always got blind dizzy in the stretch, and it passed when I crossed the post. I never knew when it was coming on. I felt all right other times. I had to make the coin, as you say, for I lived up to every cent I made. No, I never threw a race—— Yes, you can smile, Red," he finished savagely. "Smile if your face wants stretching. But that's straight. Maybe I've gone back. Maybe I'm all in. Maybe I'm a crook. But there'll come a time, it may be one year, it may be a hundred, when I'll come back—clean. I'll make good, and if you're on the track, Red, I'll show you that Garrison can ride a harder, straighter race than you or any one. This isn't my finish. There's a new deal coming to me, and I'm going to see that I get it."

Without heeding Red's pessimistic reply, Garrison turned on his heel and entered the stall where Sis, the Carter Handicap favorite, was being boxed for the coming Belmont opening.

Crimmins, the trainer, looked up sharply as Garrison entered. He was a small, hard man, with a face like an ice-pick and eyes devoid of pupils, which fact gave him a stony, blank expression. In fact, he had been likened once, by Jimmy Drake, to a needle with two very sharp eyes, and the simile was merited. But he was an excellent flesh handler; and Waterbury, an old ex-bookie, knew what he was about when he appointed him head of the stable.

"Hello, Dan!" said Garrison, in the same tone he had used to greet Red. He and the trainer had been thick, but it was a question whether that thickness would still be there. Garrison, alone in the world since he had run away from his home years ago, had no owner as most jockeys have, and Crimmins had filled the position of mentor. In fact, he had trained him, though Garrison's riding ability was not a foreign graft, but had been bred in the bone.

"Hello!" echoed Crimmins, coming forward. His manner was cordial, and Garrison's frozen heart warmed. "Of course you'll quit the game," ran on the trainer, after an exchange of commonalities. "You're queered for good. You couldn't get a mount anywhere. I ain't saying anything about you're pulling Sis, 'cause there ain't no use now. But you've got me and Mr. Waterbury in trouble. It looked as if we were in on the deal. I should be sore on you, Garrison, but I can't be. And why? Because Dan Crimmins has a heart, and when he likes a man he likes him even if murder should come 'atween. Dan Crimmins ain't a welcher. You've done me as dirty a deal as one man could hand another, but instead of getting hunk, what does Dan Crimmins do? Why, he agitates his brain thinking of a way for you to make a good living, Bud. That's Dan Crimmins' way."

Garrison was silent. He did not try to vindicate himself. He had given that up as hopeless. He was thinking, oblivious to Crimmins' eulogy.

"Yeh," continued the upright trainer; "that's Dan Crimmins' way. And after much agitating of my brain I've hit on a good money-making scheme for you, Bud."

"Eh?" asked Garrison.

"Yeh." And the trainer lowered his voice. "I know a man that's goin' to buck the pool-rooms in New York. He needs a chap who knows the ropes—one like you—and I gave him your name. I thought it would come in handy. I saw your finish a long way off. This fellah's in the Western Union; an operator with the pool-room lines. You can run the game. It's easy. See, he holds back the returns, tipping you the winners, and you skin round and lay the bets before he loosens up on the returns. It's easy money; easy and sure."

Again Garrison was silent. But now a smile was on his face. He had been

asking himself what was the use of honesty. Now here his first chance had come.

"What d'you say?" asked Crimmins, his head on one side, his small eyes calculating.

The smile was still twisting Garrison's lip. "I was going to light out, anyway," he answered slowly. "I'll answer you when I say good-by to Sis."

"All right. She's over there."

The handlers fell back in silence as Garrison approached the filly. He was softly humming the music-hall song, "Good-by, Sis." With all his faults, the handlers to a man liked Garrison. They knew how he had professed to love the filly, and now they sensed that he would prefer to say his farewell without an audience. Sis whinnied as Garrison raised her small head and looked steadily into her soft, dark eyes.

"Sis," he said slowly, "it's good-by. We've been pals, you and I; pals since you were first foaled. You're the only girl I have; the only sweetheart I have; the only one to say good-by to me. Do you care?"

The filly nuzzled at his shoulder. "I've done you dirt to-day," continued the boy a little unsteadily. "It was your race from the start. You know it; I know it. I can't explain now, Sis, how it came about. But I didn't go to do it. I didn't, girlie. You understand, don't you? I'll square that deal some day, Sis. I'll come back and square it. Don't forget me. I won't forget you—I can't. *You* don't think me a crook, Sis? Say you don't. *Say* it," he pleaded fiercely, raising her head.

The filly understood. She lipped his face, whinnying lovingly. In a moment Garrison's nerve had been swept away, and, arms flung about the dark, arched neck, he was sobbing his heart out on the glossy coat; sobbing like a little child.

How long he stayed there, the filly nuzzling him like a mother, he did not know. It seemed as if he had reached sanctuary after an æon of chaos. He had found love, understanding in a beast of the field. Where his fellow man had withheld, the filly had given her all and questioned not. For Sis, by Rex out of Reine, two-year filly, blooded stock, was a thoroughbred. And a thoroughbred, be he man, beast, or bird, does not welch on his hand. A stranger only in prosperity; a chum in adversity. He does not question; he gives.

"Well," said Crimmins, as Garrison slowly emerged from the stall, "you take the partin' pretty next your skin. What's your answer to the game I spoke of? Mulled it over? It don't take much thinking, I guess." He was paring his mourning fringed nails with great indifference.

"No, it doesn't take much thinking, Dan," agreed Garrison slowly, his eyes narrowed. "I'll rot first before I touch it."

"Yeh?" The trainer raised his thick eyebrows and lowered his thin voice. "Kind of tony, ain't yeh? Beggars can't be choosers."

"They needn't be crooks, Dan. I know you meant it all right enough," said Garrison bitterly. "You think I'm crooked, and that I'd take anything—anything; dirt of any kind, so long's there's money under it."

"Aw, sneeze!" said Crimmins savagely. Then he checked himself. "It ain't my game. I only knew the man. There's nothing in it for me. Suit yourself;" and he shrugged his shoulders. "It ain't Crimmins' way to hump his services on any man. Take it or leave it."

"You wanted me to go crooked, Dan," said Garrison steadily. "Was it friendship——"

"Huh! wanted you to go crooked?" flashed the trainer with a sneer. "What are y' talking about? Ain't yeh a welcher *now?* Ain't yeh crooked—hair, teeth, an' skin?"

"You mean that, Dan?" Garrison's face was white. "You've trained me, and yet you, too, believe I was in on those lost races? You know I lost every cent on Sis——"

"It ain't one race, it's six," snorted Crimmins. "It's Crimmins' way to agitate his brain for a friend, but it ain't his way to be a plumb fool. You can't

shoot that bull con into me, Bud. I know you. I give you an offer, friend to friend. You turn it down and 'cuse me of making you play crooked. I'm done with you. It ain't Crimmins' way."

Billy Garrison eyed his former trainer and mentor steadily for a long time. His lip was quivering.

"Damn your way!" he said hoarsely at length, and turned on his heel. His hands were deep in his pockets, his shoulders hunched as he swung out of the stable. He was humming over and over the old music-hall favorite, "Good-by, Sis"—humming in a desperate effort to keep his nerve. Billy Garrison had touched bottom in the depths.

CHAPTER II.

Garrison left Long Island for New York that night. When you are hard hit the soul suffers a reflex-action. It recoils to its native soil. New York was Garrison's home. He was a product of its sporting soil. He loved the Great White Way. But he had drunk in the smell, the intoxication of the track with his mother's milk. She had been from the South; the land of straight women, straight men, straight living, straight riding. She had brought blood—good, clean blood—to the Garrison-Loring entente cordiale—a polite definition of a huge mistake.

From his mother Garrison had inherited his cool head, steady eye, and the intuitive hands that could compel horseflesh like a magnet. From her he had inherited a peculiar recklessness and swift daring. From his father—well, Garrison never liked to talk about his father. His mother was a memory; his father a blank. He was a good-looking, bad-living sprig of a straight family-tree. He had met his wife at the New Orleans track, where her father, an amateur horse-owner, had two entries. And she had loved him. There is good in every one. Perhaps she had discovered it in Garrison's father where no one else had.

Her family threw her off—at least, when she came North with her husband, she gradually dropped out of her home circle; dropped of her own volition. Perhaps she was afraid that the good she had first discovered in her husband had been seen through a magnifying-glass. Her life with Garrison was a constant whirlwind of changing scene and fortune—the perpetual merry—or sorry—go-round of a book-maker; going from track to track, and from bad to worse. His friends said he was unlucky; his enemies, that the only honest thing in him was his cough. He had incipient consumption. So Mrs. Garrison's life, such as it was, had been lived in a trunk—when it wasn't held for hotel bills—but she had lived out her mistake gamely.

When the boy came—Billy—she thought Heaven had smiled upon her at last. But it was only hell. Garrison loved his wife, for love is not a quality possessed only by the virtuous. Sometimes the worst man can love the most—in his selfish way. And Garrison resented the arrival of Billy. He resented sharing his wife's affection with the boy.

In time he came to hate his son. Billy's education was chiefly constitutional. There wasn't the money to pay for his education for any length of time. His mother had to fight for it piecemeal. So he took his education in capsules; receiving a dose in one city and jumping to another for the next, according as a track opened.

He knew his father never cared for him, though his mother tried her best to gloze over the indifference of her husband. But Billy understood and resented it. He and his mother loved in secret. When she died, her mistake lived out to the best of her ability, young Garrison promptly ran away from his circulating home. He knew nothing of his father's people; nothing of his mother's. He was a young derelict; his inherent sense of honor and an instinctive desire for cleanliness kept him off the rocks.

The years between the time he left home and the period when he won his first mount on the track, his natural

birthright, Billy Garrison often told himself he would never care to look back upon. He was young, and he did not know that years of privation, of hardship, of semi-starvation—but with an insistent ambition goading one on—are not years to eliminate in retrospect. They are years to reverence.

He did not know that prosperity, not adversity, is the supreme test. And when the supreme test came; when the goal was attained, and the golden sun of wealth, fame, and honor beamed down upon him, little Billy Garrison was found wanting. He was swamped by the flood. He went the way of many a better, older, wiser man—the easy, rose-strewn way, big and broad and scented, that ends in a bottomless abyss filled with bitter tears and nauseating regrets; the abyss called, "It might have been."

Where he had formerly shunned vice by reason of adversity and poverty making it appear so naked, revolting, unclean, foreign to his nature, prosperity had now decked it out in her most sensuous, alluring garments. Red's moral diatribe had been correct. Garrison had followed the band-wagon to the finish, never asking where it might lead; never caring. He had youth, reputation, money—he could never overdraw that account. And so the modern pied piper played, and little Garrison blindly danced to the music with the other fools; danced on and on until he was swallowed up in the mountain.

Then he awoke too late, as they all awake; awoke to find that his vigor had been sapped by early suppers and late breakfasts; his finances depleted by slow horses and fast women; his nerve frayed to ribbons by gambling. And then had come that awful morning when he first commenced to cough. Would he, could he, ever forget it?

Billy Garrison huddled down now in the roaring train as he thought of it. It was always before him, a demoniacal obsession — that morning when he coughed, and a bright speck of arterial blood stood out like a tardy danger-signal against the white of his handkerchief; it was leering at him, saying: "I have been here always, but you have chosen to be blind."

Consumption—the jockey's Old Man of the Sea—had arrived at last. He had inherited the seeds from his father; he had assiduously cultivated them by making weight against all laws of nature; by living against laws of God and man. Now they had been punished as they always are. Nature had struck; struck hard.

That had been his first warning, and Garrison did not heed it. Instead of quitting the game, taking what little assets he had managed to save from the holocaust, and living quietly, striving for a cure, he kicked over the traces. The music of the pied piper was still in his ears; twisting his brain. He gritted his teeth. He would not give in. He would show that he was master. He would fight this insidious vitality vampire; fight and conquer.

Besides, he had to make money. The thought of going back to a pittance a year sickened him. That pittance had once been a fortune to him. But his appetite had not been gorged, satiated; rather, it had the resilience of crass youth; jumping the higher with every indulgence. It increased in ratio with his income. He had no one to guide him; no one to compel advice with a whip, if necessary. He knew it all. So he kept his curse secret. He would pile up one more fortune, retain it this time, and then retire. But nature had balked. The account—youth, reputation, money—was overthrown at last.

Came a day when in the paddock Dan Crimmins had seen that fleck of arterial blood on the handkerchief. Then Dan shared the secret. He commenced to doctor Garrison. Before every race the jockey had a drug. But despite it he rode worse than an exercise-boy; rode despicably. The Carter Handicap finished his deal. And with it Garrison had lost his reputation.

He had done many things in his mad years of prosperity—the mistakes, the faults of youth. But Billy Garrison was right when he said he was square. He never threw a race in his life. Horseflesh, the "game," was sacred to him.

He had gone wild, but never crooked. But the world now said otherwise, and it is only the knave, the saint, and the fool who never heed what the world says.

And so at twenty-two, when the average young man is leaving college for the real taste of life, little Garrison had drained it to the dregs; the lees tasted bitter in his mouth.

For obvious reasons Garrison had not chosen his usual haven, the smoking-car, on the train. It was filled to overflowing from the Aqueduct track, and he knew that his name would be mentioned frequently and in no complimentary manner. His soul had been stripped bare, sensitive to a breath. It would writhe under the mild compassion of a former admirer as much as it would under the open jibes of his enemies. He had plenty of enemies. Every "is," "has-been," "would-be," "will-be" has enemies. It is well they have. Nothing is lost in nature. Enemies make you; not your friends.

Garrison had selected a car next to the smoker and occupied a seat at the forward end, his back to the engine. His hands were deep in his pockets, his shoulders hunched, his eyes staring straight ahead under the brim of his slouch hat. His eyes were looking inward, not outward; they did not see his surroundings; they were looking in on the ruin of his life.

The present, the future, did not exist; only the past lived—lived with all the animalism of a rank growth. He was too far in the depths to even think of reerecting his life's structure. His cough was troubling him; his brain throbbing, throbbing.

Then, imperceptibly, as Garrison's staring, blank eyes slowly turned from within to without, occasioned by a violent jolt of the train, something flashed across their retina; they became focused, and a message was wired to his brain. Instantly his eyes dropped, and he fidgeted uncomfortably in his seat.

He found he had been staring into a pair of slate-gray eyes; staring long, rudely, without knowing it. Their owner was occupying a seat three removed down the aisle. As he was seated with his back to the engine, he was thus confronting them.

She was a young girl with indefinite hair, white skin coated with tan, and a very steady gaze. She would always be remembered for her eyes. Garrison instantly decided that they were beautiful. He furtively peered up from under his hat. She was still looking at him fixedly without the slightest embarrassment.

Garrison was not susceptible to the eternal feminine. He was old with a boy's face. Yet he found himself taking snap-shots at the girl opposite. She was reading now. Unwittingly he tried to criticize every feature. He could not. It was true that they were far from being regular; her nose went up like her short upper lip; her chin and underlip said that she had a temper and a will of her own. He noted also that she had a mole under her left eye. But one always returned from the facial peregrinations to her eyes. After a long stare, Garrison caught himself wishing that he could kiss those eyes. That threw him into a panic.

"Be sad, be sad," he advised himself gruffly. "What right have you to think? You're rude to stare, even if she is a queen. She wouldn't wipe her boots on you."

Having convinced himself that he should not think, Garrison promptly proceeded to speculate. How tall was she? He likened her flexible figure to Sis. Sis was his criterion. Then, for the brain is a queer actor, playing clown when it should play tragedian, Garrison discovered that he was wishing that the girl would not be taller than his own five feet two.

"As if it mattered a curse," he laughed contemptuously.

His eyes were transferred to the door. It had opened, and with the puff of following wind there came a crowd of men, emerging like specters from the blue haze of the smoker. They had evidently been "smoked out." Some of them were sober.

Garrison half-lowered his head as the crowd entered. He did not wish to be

recognized. The men, laughing noisily, crowded into what seats were unoccupied. There was one man more than the available space, and he started to occupy the half-vacant seat beside the girl with the slate-colored eyes. He was slightly more than fat, and the process of making four feet go into two was well under way when the girl spoke.

"Pardon me, this seat is reserved."

"Don't look like it," said Behemoth.

"But I say it is. Isn't that enough?"

"Full house; no reserved seats," observed the man placidly, squeezing in.

The girl flashed a look at him and then was silent. A spot of red was showing through the tan on her cheek; Garrison was watching her under his hat-brim. He saw the spot on her cheeks slowly grow and her eyes commence to harden. He saw that she was being annoyed surreptitiously and quietly. Behemoth was a Strephon, and he thought that he had found his Chloe.

Garrison pulled his hat well down over his face, rose negligently, and entered the next car. He waited there a moment and then returned. He swung down the aisle. As he approached the girl he saw her draw back. Strephon's foot was deliberately pressing Chloe's.

Garrison avoided a scene for the girl's sake. He tapped the man on the shoulder.

"Pardon me. My seat, if you please. I left it for the smoker."

The man looked up, met Garrison's cold, steady eyes, rose awkwardly, muttering something about not knowing it was reserved, and squeezed in with two of his companions farther down the aisle.

Garrison sat down without glancing at the girl. He became absorbed in the morning paper—twelve hours old.

Silence ensued. The girl had understood the fabrication instantly. She waited, her antagonism roused, to see whether Garrison would try to take advantage of his courtesy. When he was entirely oblivious of her presence she commenced to inspect him covertly out of the corners of her great gray eyes. After five minutes she spoke.

"Thank you," she said simply. Her voice was soft and throaty.

Garrison absently raised his hat and was about to resume the defunct paper when he was interrupted. A hand reached over the back of the seat and, before he had thought of resistance, he was flung violently down the aisle.

He heard a great laugh from the Behemoth's friends. He rose slowly, his fighting blood up. Then he became aware that his ejector was not one of the crowd, but a newcomer; a tall man with a fierce white mustache and imperial; dressed in a frock coat and wide, black slouch hat. He was talking.

"How dare you insult my daughter, suh?" he thundered. "By thunder, suh, I've a good mind to make you smart right proper for your lack of manners, suh! How dare you, suh? You—you contemptible little—little snail, suh! *Snail,* suh!" And quite satisfied at thus selecting the most fitting word, glaring fiercely and twisting his white mustache and imperial with a very martial air, he seated himself majestically by his daughter.

Garrison recognized him. He was Colonel Desha, of Kentucky, whose horse, Rogue, had won the Carter Handicap through Garrison's poor riding of the favorite, Sis. His daughter was expostulating with him, trying to insert the true version of the affair between her father's peppery exclamations of "Occupying my seat!" "I saw him raise his hat to you!" "How dare he?" "Complain to the management against these outrageous flirts!" "Abominable manners!" etc., etc.

Meanwhile Garrison had silently walked into the smoker. He tried to dismiss the incident from his mind, but it stuck; stuck as did the girl's eyes.

At the next station a newsboy entered the car. Garrison idly bought a paper. It was full of the Carter Handicap, giving both Crimmins' and Waterbury's version of the affair. Public opinion, it seemed, was with them. They had protested the race. It had been thrown, and Garrison's dishonor now was national.

There was a column of double-leaded

type on the first page, run in after the making up of the paper's body, and Garrison's bitter eyes negligently scanned it. But at the first word he straightened up as if an electric shock had passed through him.

"Favorite for the Carter Handicap Poisoned," was the great, staring title. The details were meager; brutally meager. They were to the effect that some one had gained access to the Waterbury stable and had fed Sis strychnin.

Garrison crumpled up the paper and buried his face in his hands, making no pretense of hiding his misery. She had been more than a horse to him; she had been everything.

"Sis—Sis," he whispered over and over again, the tears burning to his eyes, his throat choking; "I didn't get a chance to square the deal. Sis—Sis it *was* good-by—good-by forever."

CHAPTER III.

On arriving at the Thirty-fourth Street ferry, Garrison idly boarded a Forty-second Street car, drifting aimlessly with the main body of Long Island passengers going westward to disintegrate, scatter like the fragments of a bursting bomb, at Broadway. A vague sense of proprietorship, the kiss of home, momentarily smoothed out the wrinkles in his soul as the lights of the Great White Way beamed down a welcome upon him. Then it was slowly borne in on him that, though with the crowd, he was not of it. His mother, the great cosmopolitan city, had repudiated him. For Broadway is a place for presents or futures; she has no welcome for pasts. With her, charity begins at home—and stays there.

Garrison drifted hither and thither with every cross eddy of humanity, and finally dropped into the steady-pulsating, ever-moving tide on the west curb going south—the ever restless tide that never seems to reach the open sea. As he passed one well-known café after another his mind carried him back over the waste stretch of "It might have been" to the time when he was their central figure. On every block he met acquaintances who had once toasted him—with his own wine; toasted him as the king-pin. Now they either nodded absently or became suddenly vitally interested in a show-window or the new moon.

All sorts and conditions of men comprised that list of former friends, and not one now stepped out and wrung his hand; wrung it as they had only the other day, when they thought he would retrieve his fortunes by pulling off the Carter Handicap. They did not wring it now, for there was nothing to wring out of it. Now he was not only hopelessly down in the muck of poverty, but hopelessly dishonored. And gentlemanly-appearing blackguards, who had left all honesty in the cradle, now wouldn't for the world be seen talking on Broadway to little Billy Garrison, the horribly crooked jockey.

It wouldn't do at all. First, because their own position was so precarious that a breath would send it tottering. Secondly, because Billy might happen to inconveniently remember all the sums of money he had "loaned" them time and again. Actual necessity might tend to waken his memory. For they had modernized the proverb into: "A friend in need is a friend to steer clear of."

A lesson in mankind and the making had been coming to Garrison, and in that short walk down Broadway he appreciated it to the uttermost.

"Think I had the mange or the plague," he mused grimly, as a plethoric ex-alderman passed and absent-mindedly forgot to return his bow—an alderman who had been tipped by Garrison in his palmy days to a small fortune. "What if I had thrown the race?" he ran on bitterly. "Many a jockey has, and has lived to tell it. No, there's more behind it all than that. I've passed sports who wouldn't turn me down for that. But I suppose Bender" (the plethoric alderman) "staked a pot on Sis, she being the favorite and I up. And when he loses he forgets the times I tipped him to win. Poor old Sis!" he added softly, as the fact of her

poisoning swept over him. "The only thing that cared for me—gone! I'm down on my luck—hard. And it's not over yet. I feel it in the air. There's another fall coming to me."

He shivered through sheer nervous exhaustion, though the night was warm for mid-April. He rummaged in his pocket.

"One dollar in bird-seed," he mused grimly, counting the coins under the violet glare of a neighboring arc light. "All that's between me and the morgue. Did I ever think it would come to that? Well, I need a bracer. Here goes ten for a drink. Can only afford bar whisky."

He was standing on the corner of Twenty-fifth Street, and unconsciously he turned into the café of the Hoffman House. How well he knew its every square inch! It was filled with the usual sporting crowd, and Garrison entered as nonchalantly as if his arrival would merit the same commotion as in the long ago. He no longer cared. His depression had dropped from him. The lights, the atmosphere, the topics of conversation, discussion, caused his blood to flow like lava through his veins. This was home, and all else was forgotten. He was not the discarded jockey, but Billy Garrison, whose name on the turf was one to conjure with.

And then, even as he had awakened from his dream on Broadway, he now awoke to an appreciation of the immensity of his fall from grace. He knew fully two-thirds of those present. Some there were who nodded, some kindly, some pityingly. Some there were who cut him dead, deliberately turning their backs or accurately looking through the top of his hat.

Billy's square chin went up a point and his under lip came out. He would not be driven out. He would show them. He was as honest as any there; more honest than many; more foolish than all. He ordered a drink and seated himself by a table, indifferently eying the shifting crowd through the fluttering curtain of tobacco-smoke.

The staple subject of conversation was the Carter Handicap, and he sensed rather than noted the glances of the crowd as they shifted curiously to him and back again. At first he pretended not to notice them, but after a certain length of time his oblivion was sincere, for retrospect came and claimed him for its own.

He was aroused by footsteps behind him; they wavered, stopped, and a large hand was laid on his shoulder.

"Hello, kid! you here, too?"

He looked up quickly, though he knew the voice. It was Jimmy Drake, and he was looking down at him, a queer gleam in his inscrutable eyes. Garrison nodded without speaking. He noticed that the book-maker had not offered to shake hands, and the knowledge stung. The crowd was watching them curiously, and Drake waved off, with a late sporting extra he carried, half a dozen invitations to liquidate.

"Kid," he said, lowering his voice, his hand still on Garrison's shoulder, "what did you come here for? Why don't you get away? Waterbury may be here any minute."

"What's that to me?" spat out Billy venomously. "I'm not afraid of him. No call to be."

Drake considered, the queer look still in his eyes.

"Don't get busty, kid. I don't know how you ever come to do it, but it's a serious game, a dirty game, and I guess it may mean jail for you, all right."

"What do you mean?" Garrison's pinched face had gone slowly white. A vague premonition of impending further disaster possessed him, amounting almost to an obsession. "What do you mean, Jimmy?" he reiterated tensely.

Drake was silent, still scrutinizing him.

"Kid," he said finally, "I don't like to think it of you—but I know what made you do it. You were sore on Waterbury; sore for losing. You wanted to get hunk on something. But I tell you, kid, there's no deal too rotten for a man who poisons a horse——"

"Poisons a horse," echoed Garrison mechanically. "Poisons a horse. Good Lord, Drake!" he cried fiercely, in a

sudden wave of passion and understanding, jumping from his chair, "you dare to say that I poisoned Sis! You dare——"

"No, I don't. The paper does."

"The paper lies! Lies, do you hear? Let me see it! Let me see it! Where does it say that? Where, where? Show it to me if you can! Show it to me——"

His eyes slowly widened in horror, and his mouth remained agape, as he hastily scanned the contents of an article in big type on the first page. Then the extra dropped from his nerveless fingers, and he mechanically seated himself at the table, his eyes vacant. To his surprise he was horribly calm. Simply his nerves had snapped; they could torture him no longer by stretching.

"It's not enough to have—have her die, but I must be her poisoner," he said mechanically.

"It's all circumstantial evidence, or nearly so," added Drake, shifting from one foot to the other. "You were the only one who would have a cause to get square. And Crimmins says he gave you permission to see her alone. Even the stable-hands say that. It looks bad, kid. Here, don't take it so hard. Get a cinch on yourself," he added, as he watched Garrison's blank eyes and quivering face.

"I'm all right. I'm all right," muttered Billy vaguely, passing a hand over his throbbing temples.

Drake was silent, fidgeting uneasily.

"Kid," he blurted out at length, "it looks as if you were all in. Say, let me be your bank-roll, won't you? I know you lost every cent on Sis, no matter what they say. I'll give you a blank check, and you can fill it out——"

"No, thanks, Jimmy."

"Don't be touchy, kid. You'd do the same for me——"

"I mean it, Drake. I don't want a cent. I'm not hard up. Thanks all the same." Garrison's rag of honor was fluttering in the wind of his pride.

"Well," said Drake, finally and uncomfortably, "if you ever want it, Billy, you know where to come for it. I want to go down on the books as your friend, hear? Mind that. So-long."

"So-long, Jimmy. And I won't forget your stand."

Garrison continued staring at the floor. This, then, was the reason why the sporting world had cut him dead; for a horse-poisoner is ranked in the same category as that assigned to the horse-stealer of the Western frontier. There, a man's horse is his life; to the turfman it is his fortune—one and the same. And so Crimmins had testified that he had permitted him, Garrison, to see Sis alone!

Yes, the signals were set dead against him. His opinion of Crimmins had undergone a complete revolution; first engendered by the trainer offering him a dishonorable opportunity of fleecing the New York pool-rooms; now culminated by his indirect charge.

Garrison considered the issue paramount. He was furious, though so seemingly indifferent. Every ounce of resentment in his nature had been focused to the burning-point. Now he would not leave New York. Come what might, he would stand his ground. He would not run away. He would fight the charge; fight Waterbury, Crimmins—the world, if necessary. And mingled with the warp and woof of this resolve was another; one that he determined would comprise the color-scheme of his future existence; he would ferret out the slayer of Sis; not merely for his own vindication, but for hers. He regarded her slayer as a murderer, for to him Sis had been more than human.

Garrison came to himself by hearing his name mentioned. Behind him two young men were seated at a table, evidently unaware of his identity, for they were exchanging their separate views on the running of the Carter Handicap and the subsequent poisoning of the favorite.

"And I say," concluded one whose nasal twang bespoke the New Englander; "I say that it was a dirty race all through."

"One paper hints that the stable was in on it; wanted to hit the bookies

hard," put in his companion diffidently.

"No," argued the wise one, some alcohol and venom in his syllables. "Waterbury's all right. He's a square sport. I know. I ought to know, for I've got inside information. A friend of mine has a cousin who's married to the brother of a friend of Waterbury's aunt's half-sister. So I ought to know. Take it from me," added this Bureau of Inside Information, beating the table with an insistent fist; "it was a put-up job of Garrison's. I'll bet he made a mint on it. All these jockeys are crooked. I may be from Little Falls, but I *know*. You can't fool me. I've been following Garrison's record——"

"Then what did you bet on him for?" asked his companion mildly.

"Because I thought he might ride straight for once. And being up on Sis, I thought he couldn't help but win. And so I plunged—heavy. And now, by Heck! ten dollars gone, and I'm mad; mad clear through. Sis was a corker, and ought to have had the race. I read all about her in the Little Falls *Daily Banner*. I'd just like to lay hands on that Garrison—a miserable little whelp; that's what he is. He ought to have poisoned himself instead of the horse. I hope Waterbury'll do him up. I'll see him about it."

Garrison slowly arose, his face white, eyes smoldering. The devil was running riot through him. His resentment had passed from the apathetic stage to the fighting. So this was the world's opinion of him! Not only the world, but miserable wastrals of sports who "plunged heavy" with ten dollars! His name was to be bandied in their unclean mouths! He, Billy Garrison, former premier jockey, branded as a thing beyond redemption! He did not care what might happen, but he would kill that lie here and now. He was glad of the opportunity; hungry to let loose some of the resentment seething within him.

The Bureau of Inside Information and his companion looked up as Billy Garrison stood over them, hands in pockets. Both men had been drinking. Drake and half the café's occupants had drifted out.

"Which of you gentlemen just now gave his opinion of Billy Garrison?" asked the jockey quietly.

"I did, neighbor. Been roped in, too?" Inside Information splayed out his legs, and, with a very blasé air, put his thumbs in the armholes of his execrable vest. He owned a rangy frame and a loose mouth. He was showing the sights of Gotham to a friend, and was proud of his knowledge. But he secretly feared New York because he did not know it.

"Oh, it was you?" snapped Garrison venomously. "Well, I don't know your name, but mine's Billy Garrison, and you're a liar!" He struck Inside Information a whack across the face that sent him a tumbled heap on the floor.

There is no one so dangerous as a coward. There is nothing so dangerous as ignorance. The New Englander had heard much of Gotham's undercurrent and the brawls so prevalent there. He had heard and feared. He had looked for them, fascination in his fear, but till the present had never experienced one. He had heard that sporting men carried guns and were quick to use them; that when the lie was passed it meant the hospital or the morgue. He was thoroughly ignorant of the ways of a great city, of the world; incapable of meeting a crisis; of apportioning it at its true value. And so now he overdid it.

As Garrison, a contemptuous smile on his face, turned away, and started to draw a handkerchief from his hip pocket, the New Englander, thinking a revolver was on its way, scrambled to his feet, wildly seized the heavy spirit-bottle, and let fly at Garrison head. There were whisky, muscle, sinew, and fear behind the shot.

As Billy turned about to ascertain whether or not his opponent meant fight by rising from under the table, the heavy bottle landed full on his temple. He crumpled up like a withered leaf, and went over on the floor without even a sigh.

It was two weeks later when Garri-

son regained full consciousness; opened his eyes to gaze upon blank walls, blank as the ceiling. He was in a hospital, but he did not know it. He knew nothing. The past had become a blank. An acute attack of brain-fever had set in, brought on by the excitement he had undergone and finished by the smash from the spirit-bottle.

There followed many nights when doctors shook their heads and nurses frowned; nights when it was thought little Billy Garrison would cross the Great Divide; nights when he sat up in the narrow cot, his hands clenched as if holding the reins, his eyes flaming as in his feverish imagination he came down the stretch, fighting for every inch of way; crying, pleading, imploring: "Go it, Sis; go it! Take the rail! Careful, careful! Now—*now* let her out; let her out! Go, you cripple, go——" All the jargon of the turf.

He was a physical, nervous wreck, and the doctors said that he couldn't last very long, for consumption had him. It was only a matter of time, unless a miracle happened. The breath of his life was going through his mouth and nostrils; the breath of his lungs.

No one knew his name at the hospital, not even himself. There was nothing to identify him by. For Garrison, after the blow that night, had managed to crawl out to the sidewalk like a wounded beast striving to find its lair and fighting to die game.

There was no one to say him nay, no friend to help him. And hotel managements are notoriously averse to having murder or assault committed in their houses. So when they saw that Garrison was able to walk they let him go, and willingly. Then he had collapsed, crumpled in a heap on the sidewalk.

A policeman had eventually found him, and with the uncanny acumen of his ilk had unerringly diagnosed the case as a "drunk." From the station-house to Bellevue Garrison had gone his weary way, and from there, when it was finally discovered he was neither drunk nor insane, to Roosevelt Hospital. And no one knew who or what he was, and no one cared overmuch. He was simply one of the many unfortunate derelicts of a great city.

It was over six months before he left the hospital, cured as far as he could be. The doctors called his complaint by a learned and villainously unpronounceable name, which, interpreted by the Bowery, meant that Billy Garrison "had gone dippy."

But Garrison had not. His every faculty was as acute as it ever had been. Simply, Providence had drawn an impenetrable curtain over his memory, separating the past from the present; the same curtain that divides our presents from our futures. He had no past. It was a blank, shot now and then with a vague gleam of things dead and gone.

This oblivion may have been the manifestation of an all-wise Almighty. Now, at least, he could not brood over past mistakes, though, unconsciously, he might have to live them out. Life to him was a new book, not one mark appeared on its clean pages. He did not even know his name—nothing.

From the "W. G." on his linen he understood that those were his initials, but he could not interpret them; they stood for nothing. He had no letters, memoranda in his pockets, bearing his name. And so he took the name of William Good. Perhaps the "William" came to him instinctively; he had no reason for choosing "Good."

Garrison left the hospital with his cough, a little money the superintendent had kindly given to him, and his clothes; that was all.

Handicapped as he was, harried by futile attempts of memory to fathom his identity, he was about to renew the battle of life; not as a veteran, one who has earned promotion, profited by experience, but as a raw recruit.

The big city was no longer an old familiar mother, whose every mood and whimsy he sensed unerringly; now he was a stranger. The streets meant nothing to him. But when he first turned into old Broadway, a vague, uneasy feeling stirred within him; it was memory struggling like an im-

prisoned bird to be free. Almost the first person he met was Jimmy Drake. Garrison was about to pass by, oblivious, when the other seized him by the arm.

"Hello, Billy! where did you drop from——"

"Pardon me, you have made a mistake." Garrison stared coldly, blankly at Drake, shook free his arm, and passed on.

"Gee, what a cut!" mused the bookmaker, staring after the rapidly retreating figure of Garrison. "The frozen mitt for sure. What's happened now? Where's he been the past six months? Wearing the same clothes, too! *Was* that Billy Garrison? It certainly was, and yet he looked different. He's changed. Well, somehow I've queered myself for good. I don't know what I did or didn't. But I'll keep my eye on him, anyway." To cheer his philosophy, Drake passed into the Fifth Avenue for a drink.

CHAPTER IV.

Garrison had flattered himself that he had known adversity in his time, but in the months succeeding his dismissal from the hospital he qualified for a post-graduate course in privation. He was cursed with the curse of the age; it is an age of specialties, and he had none. His only one, the knowledge of the track, had been buried in him, and nothing tended to awaken it.

He had no commercial education; nothing but the *savoir faire* which wealth had given to him, and an inherent breeding inherited from his mother. By reason of his physique he was disbarred from mere manual labor, and that haven of the failure—the army.

So Garrison joined the ranks of the Unemployed Grand Army of the Republic. He knew what it was to sleep in Madison Square Park with a newspaper blanket, and to be awakened by the carol of the touring policeman. He came to know what it meant to stand in the bread-line, to go the rounds of the homeless "one-night stands."

He came perilously near reaching the level of the sodden. His morality had suffered with it all. Where in his former days of hardship he had health, ambition, a goal to strive for, friends to keep him honest with himself, now he had nothing. He was alone; no one cared.

If he had only taken to the track, his passion—legitimate passion—for horseflesh would have pulled him through. But the thought that he ever could ride never suggested itself to him.

He had no opportunity of inhaling the track's atmosphere. Sometimes he wondered idly why he liked to stop and caress every stray horse. He could not know that those same hands had once coaxed thoroughbreds down the stretch to victory. His haunts necessarily kept him from meeting with those whom he had once known. The few he did happen to meet he cut unconsciously as he had once cut Jimmy Drake.

And so day by day Garrison's morality suffered. It is so easy for the well-fed to be honest. But when there is the hunger cancer gnawing at one's vitals, not for one day, but for many, then honesty and dishonesty cease to be concrete realities. It is not a question of piling up luxuries, but of supplying mere necessity.

And day by day as the hunger cancer gnawed at Garrison's vitals it encroached on his original stock of honesty. He fought every minute of the day, but he grimly foresaw that there would come a time when he would steal the first time opportunity afforded.

Day by day he saw the depletion of his honor. He was not a moralist, a saint, a sinner. Need sweeps all theories aside; in need's fierce crucible they are transmuted to concrete realities. Those who have never known what it is to be thrown with Garrison's handicap on the charity of a great city will not understand. But those who have even tasted the bitter crust of adversity will. And it is the old blatant advice from the Seats of the Mighty: "Get a job." The old answer from the hopeless undercurrent: "How?"

There came a day when the ques-

tion of honesty or dishonesty was put up to Garrison in a way he had not foreseen. The line was drawn distinctly; there was no easy slipping over it by degrees, unnoticed.

The toilet facilities of municipal lodging-houses are severely crude and primitive. For the sake of sanitation, the whilom lodger's clothes are put in a net and fumigated in a germ-destroying temperature. The men congregate together in one long room, in various stages of pre-Adamite costumes, and the shower is turned upon them in numerical rotation.

This public washing was one of the many drawbacks to public charity which Garrison shivered at. As the warm weather set in he accordingly took full advantage of the free baths at the Battery. On his second day's dip, as he was leaving, a man whom he had noticed intently scanning the bathers tapped him on the arm.

He was shaped like an olive, with a pair of shrewd gray eyes and a clever, clean-shaven mouth. He was well-dressed, and was continually probing with a quill toothpick at his gold-filled front teeth, evidently desirous of excavating some of the precious metal.

"My name's Snark—Theobald D. Snark," he said shortly, thrusting a card into Garrison's passive hand. "I am an eminent lawyer, and would be obliged if you would favor me with a five minutes' interview in my office—American Tract Building."

"Don't know you," said Garrison blandly.

"You'll like me when you do," supplemented the eminent lawyer coolly. "Merely a matter of business, you understand. You look as if a little business wouldn't hurt you."

"Feel worse," added Billy mildly, inspecting his crumpled outfit.

He was very hungry. He caught eagerly at this quondam opening. Perhaps it would be the means of starting him in some legitimate business. Then a wild idea came to him, and slowly floated away again as he remembered that Mr. Snark had agreed that he did not know him. But while it lasted, the idea had been a thrilling one for a penniless, homeless wanderer. It had been: Supposing this lawyer knew him? Knew his real identity, and had tracked him down for clamoring relatives and a weeping father and mother? For to Garrison his parents might have been criminals or millionaires so far as he remembered.

The journey to Nassau Street was completed in silence, Mr. Snark centering all his faculties on his teeth, and Garrison on the probable outcome of this chance meeting.

The eminent lawyer's office was in a corner of the fifth shelf of the American Tract Building bookcase. It was unoccupied, Mr. Snark being so intelligent as to be able to dispense with the services of office-boy and stenographer; it was small but cozy. Offices in that building can be rented for fifteen dollars per month.

After the eminent lawyer had fortified himself from a certain black bottle labeled "Poison: external use only," which sat beside the soap-dish in the little towel-cabinet, he assumed a very preoccupied and highly official mien at his roller-top desk, where he became vitally interested in a batch of letters, presumably that morning's mail, but which in reality bore dates ranging back to the past year.

Then the eminent lawyer delved importantly into an empty letter-file; emerged after ten minutes' study in order to give Blackstone a few thoroughly familiar turns, opened the window farther to cool his fevered brain, lit a highly athletic cigar, crossed his legs, and was at last at leisure to talk business with Garrison, who had almost fallen asleep during the business rush.

"What's your name?" he asked peremptorily.

Ordinarily Garrison would have begged him to go to a climate where thermometers are not in demand, but now he was hungry, and wanted a job, so he answered obediently: "William Good."

"Good, William," said the eminent lawyer, smiling at himself in the little mirror of the towel-cabinet. He under-

stood that he possessed a thin vein of humor. Necessary quality that for an eminent lawyer. "And no occupation, I presume, and no likelihood of one, eh?"

Garrison nodded.

"Well"—and Mr. Snark made a temple of worship from his fat fingers, his cigar at right angles, his shrewd gray eyes on the ceiling—"I have a position which I think you can fill. To make a long story short, I have a client, a very wealthy gentleman of Cottonton, Virginia; name of Calvert—Major Henry Clay Calvert. Dare say you've heard of the Virginia Calverts," he added, waving the rank incense from the athletic cigar.

He had only heard of the family a week or two ago, but already he persuaded himself that their reputation was national, and that his business relations with them dated back to the Settlement days.

Garrison found occasion to say he'd never heard of them, and the eminent lawyer replied patronizingly that "we all can't be well-connected, you know." Then he went on with his short story, which, like all short stories, was a very long one.

"Now it appears that Major Calvert has a nephew somewhere whom he has never seen, and whom he wishes to recognize; in short, make him his heir. He has advertised widely for him during the past few months, and has employed a lawyer in almost every city to assist in this hunt for a needle in a haystack. This nephew's name is Dagget—William C. Dagget. His mother was a half-sister of Major Calvert's. The search for this nephew has been going on for almost a year—since Major Calvert heard of his brother-in-law's death—but the nephew has not been found."

The eminent lawyer cleared his throat eloquently and relighted the athletic cigar, which had found occasion to go out.

"It will be a very fine thing for this nephew," he added speculatively. "Very fine, indeed. Major Calvert has no children, and, as I say, the nephew will be his heir—if found. Also, the lawyer who discovers the absent youth will receive ten thousand dollars. Ten thousand dollars is not a sum to be sneezed at, Mr. Good. Not to be sneezed at, sir. Not to be sneezed at," thundered the eminent lawyer forensically.

Garrison agreed. He would never think of sneezing at it, even if he was subject to that form of recreation. But what had that to do with him?

The eminent lawyer attentively scrutinized the blue streamer from his cigar.

"Well, I've found him at last. You are he, Mr. Good. Mr. Good, my heartiest congratulations, sir." And Mr. Snark insisted upon shaking the bewildered Garrison impressively by the hand.

Garrison's head swam. Then his wild dream had come true! His identity had been at last discovered! He was not the offspring of some criminal, but the scion of a noble Virginia house! But Mr. Snark was talking again.

"You see," he began slowly, focusing an attentive eye on Garrison's face, noting its every light and shade, "this nice old gentleman and his wife are hard up for a nephew. You and I are hard up for money. Why not effect a combination? Eh, why not? It would be sinful to waste such an opportunity of doing good. In you I give them a nice, respectable nephew, who is tired of reaping his wild oats. You are probably much better than the original. We are all satisfied. I do everybody a good turn by the exercise of a little judgment."

Garrison's dream crumbled to ashes.

"Oh!" he said blankly, "you—you mean to palm me off as the nephew?"

"Exactly, my son; the long-lost nephew. You are fitted for the rôle. They have never seen the original, and then, by chance, you have a birthmark, shaped like a spur, beneath your right collar-bone. Oh, yes, I marked it while you were bathing. I've haunted the baths in the chance of finding a duplicate, for I could not afford to run the risks of advertising.

"It seems this nephew has a similar mark, his mother having mentioned it

once in a letter to her brother, and it is the only means of identification. Luck is with us, Mr. Good, and of course you will take full advantage of it. As a side bonus you can pay me twenty-five thousand or so when you come into the estate on your uncle's death."

The eminent lawyer, his calculating eye still on Garrison, then proceeded with much forensic ability and virile imagination to lay the full beauties of the "cinch" before him.

"But supposing the real nephew shows up?" asked Garrison hesitatingly, after half an hour's discussion.

"Impossible. I am fully convinced that he's dead. Possession is nine points of the law, my son. If he should happen to turn up, which he won't, why, you have only to brand him as a fraud. I'm a kind-hearted man, and I merely wish Major Calvert to have the pleasure of killing fatted calf for one instead of a burial. I'm sure the real nephew is dead. Anyway, the search will be given up when you are found."

"But about identification?"

"Oh, the mark's enough; quite enough. You've never met your kin, but you can have very sweet, childish recollections of having heard your mother speak of them. I know enough of old Calvert to post you on the family. You've lived North all your life. We'll fix up a nice respectable series of events regarding how you came to be away in China somewhere, and thus missed seeing the advertisement.

"We'll let my discovery of you stand as it is, only we'll substitute the swimming-pool of the New York Athletic Club in lieu of the Battery. The Battery wouldn't sound good form. Romanticism always makes truth more palatable. Trust me to work things to a highly artistic and flawless finish. I can procure any number of witnesses—at so much per head—who have time and again distinctly heard your childish prattle regarding dear Uncle and Aunty Calvert.

"I'll wire on that the long-lost nephew has been found, and you can proceed to lie right down in your ready-made bed of roses. There won't be any thorns. Bit of a step up from municipal lodging-houses, eh?"

Garrison clenched his hands. His honor was in the last ditch. The great question had come; not in the guise of a loaf of bread, but this. How long his honor put up a fight he did not know, but the eminent lawyer was apparently satisfied regarding the outcome, for he proceeded very leisurely to read the morning paper, leaving Garrison to his thoughts.

And what thoughts they were! What excuses he made to himself—poor hostages to a fast-crumbling honor! Only the exercise of a little subterfuge and all this horrible present would be a past. No more sleeping in the parks, no more of the hunger cancer. He would have a name, friends, kin, a future. Something to live for. Some one to care for; some one to care for him. And he would be all that a nephew should be; all that, and more. He would make all returns in his power.

He had even reached the point where he saw in the future himself confessing the deception; saw himself forgiven and being loved for himself alone. And he would confess it all—his share, but not Snark's. All he wanted was a start in life. A name to keep clean; traditions to uphold, for he had none of his own. All this he would gain for a little subterfuge. And perhaps, as Snark had acutely pointed out, he might be a better nephew than the original. He *would* be.

When a man begins to compromise with dishonesty, there is only one outcome. Garrison's rag of honor was hauled down. He agreed to the deception. He would play the rôle of William C. Dagget, the lost nephew.

When he made his intention known, the eminent lawyer nodded as if to say that Garrison wasted an unnecessary amount of time over a very childish problem, and then he proceeded to go into the finer points of the game, building up a life history, supplying dates, etc. Then he sent a wire to Major Calvert. Afterward he took Garrison to

his first respectable lunch in months and bought him an outfit of clothes. On their return to the corner nook, fifth shelf of the bookcase, a reply was awaiting them from Major Calvert. The long-lost nephew, in company with Mr. Snark, was to start the next day for Cottonton, Virginia. The telegram was warm, and commended the eminent lawyer's ability.

"Son," said the eminent lawyer dreamily, carefully placing the momentous wire in his pocket, "a good deed never goes unrewarded. Always remember that. There is nothing like the old biblical behest: 'Let us pray.' You for your bed of roses; me for—for——" mechanically he went to the small towel-cabinet and gravely pointed the unfinished observation with the black bottle labeled "Poison."

"To the long-lost nephew, Mr. William C. Dagget. To the bed of roses. And to the eminent lawyer, Theobald D. Snark, Esq., who has mended a poor fortune with a better brain. Gentlemen," he concluded grandiloquently, slowly surveying the little room as if it were an overcrowded Colosseum—"gentlemen, with your permission, together with that of the immortal Mr. Swiveller, we will proceed to drown it in the rosy. Drown it in the rosy, gentlemen." And so saying, Mr. Snack gravely tilted the black bottle ceilingward.

The following evening, as the shadows were lengthening, Garrison and the eminent lawyer pulled into the neat little station of Cottonton. The good-by to Gotham had been said. It had not been difficult for Garrison to say good-by. He was bidding farewell to a life and a city that had been detestable in the short year he had known it. The lifetime spent in it had been forgotten. But with it all he had said good-by to honor. On the long train trip he had been smothering his conscience, feebly awakened by the approaching meeting, the touch of new clothes, and the prospect of a consistently full stomach. He even forgot to cough once or twice.

But the conscience was only feebly awakened. The eminent lawyer had judged his client right. For as one is never miserly until one has acquired wealth, so Garrison was loath to vacate the bed of roses now that he had felt how exceeding pleasant it was. To go back to rags and the hunger cancer and homelessness would be hard; very hard even if honor stood at the other end.

"There they are—the major and his wife," whispered Snark, gripping his arm and nodding out of the window to where a tall, clean-shaven, white-haired man and a lady who looked the thoroughbred stood anxiously scanning the windows of the cars. Drawn up at the curb behind them was a smart two-seated phaeton, with a pair of clean-limbed bays. The driver was not a negro, as is usually the case in the South, but a tight-faced little man, who looked the typical London cockney that he was.

Garrison never remembered how he got through his introduction to his "uncle" and "aunt." His home-coming was a dream. The sense of shame was choking him as Major Calvert seized both hands in a stone-crusher grip and looked down upon him, steadily, kindly, for a long time.

And then Mrs. Calvert, a dear, middle-aged lady, had her arms about Garrison's neck and was saying over and over again in the impulsive Southern fashion: "I'm *so* glad to see you, dear. You've your mother's own eyes. You know she and I were chums."

Garrison had choked, and if the eminent lawyer's wonderful vocabulary and eloquent manner had not just then intervened, Garrison then and there would have wilted and confessed everything. If only, he told himself fiercely, Major Calvert and his wife had not been so courteous, so trustful, so simple, so transparently honorable, incapable of crediting a dishonorable action to another, then perhaps it would not have been so difficult.

The ride behind the spanking bays was all a dream; all a dream as they drove up the long, white, wide Logan Pike under the nodding trees and the soft evening sun. Everything was peaceful—the blue sky, the waving corn-fields, the magnolia, the songs of

the homing birds. The air tasted rich as with great breaths he drew it into his lungs. It gave him hope. With this air to aid him he might successfully grapple with consumption.

Garrison was in the rear seat of the phaeton with Mrs. Calvert, mechanically answering questions, giving chapters of his fictitious life, while she regarded him steadily with her grave blue eyes. Mr. Snark and the major were in the middle seat, and the eminent lawyer was talking a veritable blue streak, occasionally flinging over his shoulder a bolstering remark in answer to one of Mrs. Calvert's questions, as his quick ear detected a preoccupation in Garrison's tones, and he sensed that there might be a sudden collapse to their rising fortunes. He was in a very good humor, for, besides the ten thousand, and the bonus he would receive from Garrison on the major's death, he had accepted an invitation to stay the week end at Calvert House.

Garrison's inattention was suddenly swept away by the clatter of hoofs audible above the noise contributed by the bays. A horse, which Garrison instinctively, and to his own surprise, judged to be a two-year-old filly, was approaching at a hard gallop down the broad pike. Her rider was a young girl, hatless, who now let loose a boyish shout and waved a gauntleted hand. Mrs. Calvert, smilingly, returned the hail.

"A neighbor and a lifelong friend of ours," she said, turning to Garrison. "I want you to be very good friends, you and Sue. She is a very lovely girl, and I know you will like her. I want you to. She has been expecting your coming. I am sure she is anxious to see what you look like."

Garrison made some absent-minded, commonplace answer. His eyes were kindling strangely as he watched the oncoming filly. His blood was surging through him. Unconsciously, his hands became ravenous for the reins. A vague memory was stirring within him. And then the girl had swung her mount beside the carriage, and Major Calvert, with all the ceremonious courtesy of the South, had introduced her.

She was a slim girl, with a wealth of indefinite hair, now gold, now bronze, and she regarded Garrison with a pair of very steady gray eyes. Beautiful eyes they were; and, as she pulled off her gauntlet and bent down a slim hand from the saddle, he looked up into them. It seemed as if he looked into them for ages. Where had he seen them before? In a dream? And her name was Desha. Where had he heard that name? Memory was struggling furiously to tear away the curtain that hid the past.

"I'm right glad to see you," said the girl, finally, a slow blush coming to the tan of her cheek. She slowly drew away her hand, as, apparently, Garrison had appropriated it forever.

"The honor is mine," returned Garrison mechanically, as he replaced his hat. Where had he heard that throaty voice?

CHAPTER V.

A week had passed—a week of new life for Garrison, such as he had never dreamed of living. Even in the heyday of his fame, forgotten by him, unlimited wealth had never brought the peace and content of Calvert House. It seemed as if his niche had long been vacant in the household, awaiting his occupancy, and at times he had difficulty in realizing that he had won it through deception, not by right of blood.

The prognostications of the eminent lawyer, Mr. Snark, to the effect that everything would be surprisingly easy, were fully realized. To the major and his wife the birthmark of the spur was convincing proof; and, if more were needed, the thorough coaching of Snark was sufficient.

More than that, a week had not passed before it was made patently apparent to Garrison, much to his surprise and no little dismay, that he was liked for himself alone. The major was a father to him, Mrs. Calvert a mother in every sense of the word. He had seen Sue Desha twice since his "home-coming," for the Calvert and Desha estates joined.

Old Colonel Desha had eyed Garri-

son somewhat queerly on being first introduced, but he had a poor memory for faces, and was unable to connect the newly discovered nephew of his neighbor and friend with little Billy Garrison, the one-time premier jockey, whom he had frequently seen ride.

The week's stay at Calvert House had already begun to show its beneficial effect upon Garrison. The regular living, clean air, together with the services of the family doctor, were fighting the consumption germs with no little success. For it had not taken the keen eye of the major nor the loving one of the wife, very long to discover that the tuberculosis germ was clutching at Garrison's lungs.

"You've gone the pace, young man," said the venerable family doctor, tapping his patient with the stethoscope. "Gone the pace, and now nature is clamoring for her long-deferred payment."

The major was present, and Garrison felt the hot blood surge to his face, as the former's eyes were riveted upon him.

"Youth is a prodigal spendthrift," put in the major sadly. "But isn't it hereditary, doctor? Perhaps the seed was cultivated, not sown, eh?"

"Assiduously cultivated," replied Doctor Blandly dryly. "You'll have to get back to first principles, my boy. You've made an oven out of your lungs by cigarette-smoke. You inhale? Of course. Quite the correct thing. Have you ever blown tobacco-smoke through a handkerchief? Yes? Well, it leaves a dark-brown stain, doesn't it? That's what your lungs are like—coated with nicotin. Your wind is gone. That is why cigarettes are so injurious. Not because, as some people tell you, they are made of inferior tobacco, but because you inhale them. That's where the danger is. Smoke a pipe or cigar, if smoke you must; those you don't inhale. Keep your lungs for what God intended them for—fresh air. Then, your vitality is nearly bankrupt. You've made an old curiosity-shop out of your stomach. You require regular sleep—tons of it——"

"But I'm never sleepy," argued Garrison, feeling very much like a schoolboy catechised by his master. "When I wake in the mornings, I awake instantly, every faculty alert——"

"Naturally," grunted the old doctor. "Don't you know that is proof positive that you have lived on stimulants? It is artificial. You *should* be drowsy. I'll wager the first thing you do mornings is to roll a smoke; eh? Exactly. Smoke on an empty stomach! That's got to be stopped. It's the simple life for you. Plenty of exercise in the open air; live, bathe, in sunshine. It is the essence of life. I think, major, we can cure this young prodigal of yours. But he must obey me—implicitly."

Subsequently, Major Calvert had, for him, a serious conversation with Garrison.

"I believe in youth having its fling," he said kindly, in conclusion; "but I don't believe in flinging so far that you cannot retrench safely. From Doctor Blandly's statements, you seem to have come mighty near exceeding the speed limit, my boy."

He bent his white brows and regarded Garrison steadily out of his keen eyes, in which lurked a fund of potential understanding.

"But sorrow," he continued, "acts on different natures in different ways. Your mother's death must have been a great blow to you. It was to me." He looked fixedly at his nails. "I understand fully what it must mean to be thrown adrift on the world at the age you were. I don't wish you ever to think that we knew of your condition at the time. We didn't—not for a moment. I did not learn of your mother's death until long afterward, and only of your father's by sheer accident. But we have already discussed these subjects, and I am only touching on them now because I want you, as you know, to be as good a man as your mother was a woman; not a man like your father was. You want to forget that past life of yours, my boy, for you are to be my heir; to be worthy of the name of Calvert, as I feel confident you will. You have your mother's blood. When

your health is improved, we will discuss more serious questions, regarding your future, your career; also—your marriage." He came over and laid a kindly hand on Garrison's shoulder.

And Garrison had been silent. He was in a mental and moral fog. He guessed that his supposed father had not been all that a man should be. The eminent lawyer, Mr. Snark, had said as much. He knew himself that he was nothing that a man should be. His conscience was fully awakened by now. Every worthy ounce of blood he possessed cried out for him to go; to leave Calvert House before it was too late; before the old major and his wife grew to love him as there seemed danger of them doing.

He was commencing to see his deception in its true light; the crime he was daily, hourly, committing against his host and hostess; against all decency. He had no longer a prop to support him with specious argument, for the eminent lawyer had returned to New York, carrying with him his initial proceeds of the rank fraud—Major Calvert's check for ten thousand dollars.

Garrison was face to face with himself; he was beginning to see his dishonesty in all its hideous nakedness. And yet he stayed at Calvert House; stayed on the crater of a volcano, fearing every stranger who passed, fearing to meet every neighbor; fearing that his deception must become known, though reason told him such fear was absurd. He stayed at Calvert House, braving the abhorrence of his better self; stayed not through any appreciation of the Calvert flesh-pots, nor because of any monetary benefits, present or future. He lived in the present, for the hour, oblivious to everything.

For Garrison had fallen in love with his next-door neighbor, Sue Desha. Though he did not know his past life, it was the first time he had understood to the full the meaning of the ubiquitous, potential verb "to love." And, instead of bringing peace and content—the whole gamut of the virtues—hell awoke in little Billy Garrison's soul.

The second time he had seen her was the day following his arrival, and when he had started on Doctor Blandly's open-air treatment.

"I'll have a partner over to put you through your paces at tennis," Mrs. Calvert had said, a quiet twinkle in her eye. And shortly afterward, as Garrison was aimlessly batting the balls about, feeling very much like an overgrown schoolboy, Sue Desha, tennis-racket in hand, had come up the drive.

She was bareheaded, dressed in a blue sailor costume, her sleeves rolled high on her firm, tanned arms. She looked very businesslike, and was, as Garrison very soon discovered.

Three sets were played in profound silence, or, rather, the girl made a spectacle out of Garrison. Her services were diabolically unanswerable; her net and back court game would have merited the earnest attention of an expert, and Garrison hardly knew where a racket began or ended.

At the finish he was covered with perspiration and confusion, while his opponent, apparently, had not begun to warm up. By mutual consent, they occupied a seat underneath a spreading magnolia-tree, and then the girl insisted upon Garrison resuming his coat. They were like two children.

"You'll get cold; you're not strong," said the girl, finally, with the manner of a very old and experienced mother. She was four years younger than Garrison. "Put it on; you're not strong. That's right. Always obey."

"I am strong," persisted Garrison, flushing. He felt very like a schoolboy.

The girl eyed him critically, calmly. "Oh, but you're not; not a little bit. Do you know, you're very—very—rickety? Very rickety, indeed."

Garrison eyed his flannels in visible perturbation. They flapped about his thin, wiry shanks most disagreeably. He was painfully conscious of his elbows, of his thin chest. Painfully conscious that the girl was physical perfection, he a parody of manhood. He looked up, with a smile, and met the girl's frank eyes.

"I think rickety is just the word," he agreed, spanning a wrist with a finger and thumb.

"You cannot play tennis, can you?" asked the girl dryly. "Not a little, tiny bit."

"No; not a little bit."

"Golf?" Head on one side.

"Not guilty."

"Swim?"

"Gloriously. Like a stone."

"Run?" Head on the other side.

"If there's any one after me."

"Ride? Every one rides down thisaway, you know."

A sudden vague passion mouthed at Garrison's heart. "Ride?" he echoed, eyes far away. "I—I think so."

"Only think so! Humph!" She swung a restless foot. "Can't you do *anything?*"

"Well," critically, "I think I can eat, and sleep——"

"And talk nonsense. Let me see your hand." She took it imperiously, palm up, in her lap, and examined it critically, as if it were the paw of some animal. "My! it's as small as a woman's!" she exclaimed, in dismay. "Why, you could wear my glove, I believe." There was one part disdain to three parts amusement, ridicule, in her throaty voice.

"It is small," admitted Garrison, eying it ruefully. "I wish I had thought of asking mother to give me a bigger one. Is it a crime?"

"No; a calamity." Her foot was going restlessly. "I like your eyes," she said calmly, at length.

Garrison bowed. He was feeling decidedly uncomfortable. He had never met a girl like this. Nothing seemed sacred to her. She was as frank as the wind, or sun.

"You know," she continued, her great eyes half-closed, "I was awfully anxious to see you when I heard you were coming home ——"

"Why?"

She turned and faced him, her gray eyes opened wide. "Why? Isn't one always interested in one's future husband?"

It was Garrison who was confused. Something caught at his throat. He stammered, but words would not come. He laughed nervously.

"Didn't you know we were engaged?" asked the girl, with childlike simplicity and astonishment. "Oh, yes. How superb!"

"Engaged? Why—why——"

"Of course. Before we were born. Your uncle and aunt and my parents had it all framed up. I thought you knew. A cut-and-dried affair. Are not you just wild with delight?"

"But—but," expostulated Garrison, his face white, "supposing the real ne—— I mean, supposing I had not come home? Supposing I had been dead?"

"Why, then," she replied calmly, "then, I suppose, I would have a chance of marrying some one I really loved. But what is the use of supposing? Here you are, turned up at the last minute, like a bad penny, and here I am, very much alive. Ergo, our relatives' wishes respectfully fulfilled, and—connubial misery *ad libitum. Mes condolences.* If you feel half as bad as I do, I really feel sorry for you. But, frankly, I think the joke is decidedly on me."

Garrison was silent, staring with hard eyes at the ground. He could not begin to analyze his thoughts.

"You are not complimentary, at all events," he said quietly, at length.

"So every one tells me," she sighed.

"I did not know of this arrangement," he added, looking up, a queer smile twisting his lips.

"And now you are lonesomely miserable, like I am," she rejoined, crossing a restless leg. "No doubt you have left your ideal in New York. Perhaps you are married already. Are you?" she cried eagerly, seizing his arm.

"No such good luck—for you," he added, under his breath.

"I thought so," she sighed resignedly. "Of course no one would have you. It's hopeless."

"It's not," he argued sharply, his pride, anger in revolt. He, who had no right to any claim. "We're not com-

pelled to marry each other. It's a free country. It is ridiculous, preposterous."

"Oh, don't get so fussy!" she interrupted petulantly. "Don't you think I've tried to kick over the traces? And I've had more time to think of it than you—all my life. It is a family institution. Your uncle pledged his nephew, if he should have one, and my parents pledged me. We are hostages to their friendship. They wished to show how much they cared for one another by making us supremely miserable for life. Of course, I spent my life in arranging how you should look, if you ever came home—which I devoutly hoped you wouldn't. It wouldn't be so difficult, you see, if you happened to match my ideals. Then it would be a real love-feast, with parents' blessings and property thrown in to boot."

"And then I turn up—a little, undersized, nothingless pea, instead of the regular patented, double-action, stalwart Adonis of your imagination," added Garrison dryly.

"How well you describe yourself!" said the girl admiringly.

"It must be horrible!" he condoled half-cynically.

"And of course you, too, were horribly disappointed?" she added, after a moment's pause, tapping her oxford with tennis-racket.

Garrison turned and deliberately looked into her gray eyes.

"Yes; I am—horribly," he lied calmly. "My ideal is the dark, quiet girl of the clinging type."

"She wouldn't have much to cling to," sniffed the girl. "We'll be miserable together, then. Do you know, I almost hate you! I think I do. I'm quite sure I do."

Garrison eyed her in silence, the smile on his lips. She returned the look, her face flushed.

"Miss Desha——"

"You'll have to call me Sue. You're Billy; I'm Sue. That's one of the minor penalties. Our prenatal engagement affords us this charming familiarity," she interrupted scathingly.

"Sue, then. Sue," continued Garrison quietly, "from your type, I thought you fashioned of better material. Now, don't explode—yet awhile. I mean property and parents' blessing should not weigh a curse with you. Yes; I said curse—damn, if you wish. If you loved, this burlesque engagement should not stand in your way. You would elope with the man you love, and let property and parents' blessings——"

"That would be a good way for you to get out of the muddle unscathed, wouldn't it?" she flashed in. "How chivalrous! Why don't *you* elope with some one—the dark, clinging girl—and let me free? You want me to suffer, not yourself. Just like you Yankees—cold-blooded icicles!"

Garrison considered. "I never thought of that, honestly!" he said, with a laugh. "I would elope quick enough, if I had only myself to consider."

"Then your dark, clinging girl is lacking in the very virtues you find so wofully missing in me. *She* won't take a risk. I cannot say I blame her," she added, scanning the brooding Garrison.

He laughed good-humoredly. "How you must detest me! But cheer up, my sister in misery! You will marry the man you love, all right. Never fear."

"Will I?" she asked enigmatically. Her eyes were half-shut, watching Garrison's profile. "Will I, soothsayer?"

He nodded comprehensively, bitterly.

"You will. One of the equations of the problem will be eliminated, and thus will be found the answer."

"Which?" she asked softly, heel tapping gravel.

"The unnecessary one, of course. Isn't it always the unnecessary one?"

"You mean," she said slowly, "that you will go away?"

Garrison nodded.

"Of course," she added, after a pause, "the dark, clinging girl is waiting?"

"Of course," he bantered.

"It must be nice to be loved like that." Her eyes were wide and far away. "To have one renounce relatives, position, wealth—all, for love. It must be very nice, indeed."

Still, Garrison was silent. He had cause to be.

"Do you think it is right, fair," con-

tinued the girl slowly, her brow wrinkled speculatively, "to break your uncle's and aunt's hearts for the sake of a girl? You know how they have longed for your home-coming. How much you mean to them! You are all they have. Don't you think you are selfish—very selfish?"

"I believe the Bible says to leave all and cleave unto your wife," returned Garrison.

"Yes. But not your intended wife."

"But, you see, she is of the cleaving type."

"And why this hurry? Aren't you depriving your uncle and aunt unnecessarily early?"

"But it is the only answer, as you pointed out. You then would be free."

He did not know why he was indulging in this repartee. Perhaps because the situation was so novel, so untenable. But a strange, new force was working in him that day, imparting a peculiar twist to his humor. He was hating himself. He was hopeless, cynical, bitter.

If he could have laid hands upon that eminent lawyer, Mr. Snark, he would have wrung his accomplished neck to the best of his ability. He, Snark, must have known about this prenatal engagement. And his bitterness, his hopelessness, were all the more real, for already he knew that he cared, and cared a great deal, for this curious girl with the steady gray eyes and wealth of indefinite hair; cared more than he would confess even to himself. It seemed as if he always had cared; as if he had always been looking into the depths of those great gray eyes. They were part of a dream, the focusing-point of the misty past—forever out of focus.

The girl had been considering his answer, and now she spoke.

"Of course," she said gravely, "you are not sincere when you say your primal reason for leaving would be in order to set me free. Of course you are not sincere."

"Is insincerity necessarily added to my numerous physical infirmities?" he bantered.

"Not necessarily. But there is always the love to make a virtue of necessity—especially when there's some one waiting on necessity."

"But did I say that would be my primal reason for leaving—setting you free? I thought I merely stated it as one of the following blessings attendant on virtue."

"Equivocation means that you were not sincere. Why don't you go, then?"

"Eh?" Garrison looked up sharply at the tone of her voice.

"Why don't you go? Hurry up! Reward the clinging girl and set me free."

"Is there such a hurry? Won't you let me ferret out a pair of pajamas, to say nothing of good-bys?"

"How silly you are!" she said coldly, rising. "The question, then, rests entirely with you. Whenever you make up your mind to go——"

"Couldn't we let it hang fire indefinitely? Perhaps you could learn to love me. Then there would be no need to go." Garrison smiled deliberately up into her eyes, the devil working in him.

Miss Desha returned his look steadily. "And the other girl—the clinging one?" she asked calmly.

"Oh, she could wait. If we didn't hit it off, I could fall back on her. I would hate to be an old bachelor."

"No; I don't think it would be quite a success," said the girl critically. "You see, I think you are the most detestable person I ever met. I really pity the other girl. It's better to be an old bachelor than to be a young—cad."

Garrison rose slowly.

CHAPTER VI.

"And what is a cad?" he asked abstractedly.

"One who shames his birth and position by his breeding."

"And no question of dishonesty enters into it?" He could not say why he asked. "It is not, then, a matter of moral ethics, but of mere—well——"

"Sensitiveness," she finished dryly. "I really think I prefer rank dishonesty, if it is offset by courtesy and good

breeding. You see, I am not at all moral."

Here Mrs. Calvert made her appearance, with a book and sunshade. She was a woman whom a sunshade completed.

"I hope you two have not been quarreling," she observed. "It is too nice a day for that. I was watching the slaughter of the innocents on the tennis-court. Really, you play a wretched game, William."

"So I have been informed," replied Garrison. "It is quite a relief to have so many people agree with me for once."

"In this instance you can believe them," commented the girl. She turned to Mrs. Calvert. "Whose ravings are you going to listen to now?" she asked, taking the book Mrs. Calvert carried.

"A matter of duty," laughed the elder woman. "No; it's not a novel. It came this morning. The major wishes me to assimilate it and impart to him its nutritive elements—if it contains any. He is so miserably busy—doing nothing, as usual. But it is a labor of love. If we women are denied children, we must interest ourselves in other things.'

"Oh!" exclaimed the girl, with interest; "it's the year's record of the track!" She was thumbing over the leaves. "I'd love to read it! May I when you've done? Thank you. Why, here's Sysonby, Gold Heels, The Picket—dear old Picket! Kentucky's pride! And here's Sis. Remember Sis? The Carter Handicap——"

She broke off suddenly and turned to the silent Garrison. "Did you go much to the track up North?" She was looking straight at him.

"I—I—that is—why, yes, of course," he murmured vaguely. "May I see it?"

He took the book from her unwilling hand. A full-page photograph of Sis was confronting him. He studied it long and carefully, passing a troubled hand nervously over his forehead.

"I—I think I've seen her," he said, at length, looking up vacantly. "Somehow, she seems familiar."

Again he fell to studying the graceful lines of the thoroughbred, oblivious of his audience.

"She is a Southern horse," commented Mrs. Calvert. "Rather, she was. Of course you-all heard of her poisoning? It never said whether she recovered. Do you know?"

Garrison glanced up quickly, and met Sue Desha's unwavering stare.

"Why, I believe I did hear that she was poisoned, or something to that effect, now that you mention it." His eyes were still vacant.

"You look as if you had seen a ghost," laughed Sue, her eyes on the magnolia-tree.

He laughed somewhat nervously. "I—I've been thinking."

"Is the major going in for the Carter this year?" asked the girl, turning to Mrs. Calvert. "Who will he run—Dixie?"

"I think so. She is the logical choice." Mrs. Calvert was nervously prodding the gravel with her sunshade. "Sometimes I wish he would give up all ideas of it."

"I think father is responsible for that. Since Rogue won the last Carter, father is horse-mad, and has infected all his neighbors."

"Then it will be friend against friend," laughed Mrs. Calvert. "For, of course, the colonel will run Rogue again this year——"

"I—I don't think so." The girl's face was sober. "That is," she added hastily, "I don't know. Father is still in New York. I think his initial success has spoiled him. Really, he is nothing more than a big child." She laughed affectedly. Mrs. Calvert's quiet, keen eyes were on her.

"Racing can be carried to excess, like everything," said the older woman, at length. "I suppose the colonel will bring home with him this Mr. Waterbury you were speaking of?"

The girl nodded. There was silence, each member of the trio evidently engrossed with thoughts that were of moment.

Mrs. Calvert was idly thumbing over the race-track annual. "Here is a page torn out," she observed absently. "I

wonder what it was? A thing like that always piques my curiosity. I suppose the major wanted it for reference. But then he hasn't seen the book yet. I wonder who wanted it? Let me see—yes, it's ended here. Oh, it must have been the photograph and record of that jockey, Billy Garrison! Remember him? What a brilliant career he had! One never hears of him nowadays. I wonder what became of him?"

"Billy Garrison?" echoed Garrison slowly. "Why—I—I think I've heard of him——"

He was cut short by a laugh from the girl. "Oh, you're good! Why, his name used to be a household word. You should have heard it. But, then, I don't suppose you ever went to the track. Those who do don't forget."

Mrs. Calvert walked slowly away. "Of course you'll stay for lunch, Sue," she called back. "And a canter might get up an appetite. William, I meant to tell you before this that the major has reserved a horse for your use. He is mild and thoroughly broken. Crimmins will show him to you in the stable. You must learn to ride. You'll find riding-clothes in your room, I think. I recommend an excellent teacher in Sue. Good-by, and don't get thrown."

"Are you willing?" asked the girl curiously.

Garrison's heart was pounding strangely. His mouth was dry. "Yes, yes," he said eagerly.

The tight-faced cockney, Crimmins, was in the stable when Garrison, in riding-breeches, puttee leggings, etc., entered. Four names were whirling over and over in his brain ever since they had been first mentioned. Four names—Sis, Waterbury, Garrison, and Crimmins. He did not know why they should keep recurring with such maddening persistency. And yet how familiar they all seemed!

Crimmins eyed him askance as he entered.

"Goin' for a canter, sir? Ho, yuss; this 'ere is the 'orse the marster said as 'ow you were to ride, sir. It don't matter which side yeh get on. 'E's as stiddy-goin' as a alarum clock. Ho, yuss. I calls 'im Waterbury Watch—partly because I 'appen to 'ave a brother wot's trainer for Mr. Waterbury, the turfman, sir."

Crimmins shifted his cud with great satisfaction at this uninterrupted flow of loquacity and brilliant humor. Garrison was looking the animal over instinctively, his hands running from hock to withers and back again.

"How old is he?" he asked absently.

"Three years, sir. Ho, yuss. Thoroughbred. Cast-off from the Duryea stable. By Sysonby out of Hamburg Belle. Won the Brighton Beach overnight sweepstakes in nineteen an' four. Ho, yuss. Just a little off his oats, but a bloomin' good 'orse."

Garrison turned, speaking mechanically. "I wonder do you think I'm a fool! Sysonby himself won the Brighton sweepstakes in nineteen-four. It was the beginning of his racing career, and an easy win. This animal here is a plug; an out-and-out plug of the first water. He never saw Hamburg Belle or Sysonby—they never mated. This plug's a seven-year-old, and he couldn't do seven furlongs in seven weeks. He never was class, and never could be. I don't want to ride a cow, I want a horse. Give me that two-year-old black filly with the big shoulders. Whose is she?"

Crimmins shifted the cud again to hide his astonishment at Garrison's sudden *savoir faire*.

"She's wicked, sir. Bought for the missus, but she ain't broken yet."

"She hasn't been handled right. Her mouth's hard, but her temper's even. I'll ride her," said Garrison shortly.

"Have to wear blinkers, sir."

"No, I won't. Saddle her. Hurry up. Shorten the stirrup. There, that's right. Stand clear."

Crimmins eyed Garrison narrowly as he mounted. He was quite prepared to run with a clothes-basket to pick up the remains. But Garrison was up like a feather, high on the filly's neck, his shoulders hunched. The minute he felt the saddle between his knees he was at home again after a long, long absence. He had come into his birthright.

The filly quivered for a moment, laid back her ears, and then was off.

"Cripes!" ejaculated the veracious Crimmins, as wide-eyed he watched the filly fling gravel down the drive, "'e's got a seat like Billy Garrison himself. 'E can ride, that kid. An' 'e knows 'orse-flesh. Blimy if 'e don't! If Garrison weren't down an' out I'd be ready to tyke my Alfred David it were 'is bloomin' self. An' I thought 'e was a dub! Ho, yuss—me!"

Moralizing on the deceptiveness of appearances, Crimmins fortified himself with another slab of cut-plug.

Miss Desha, up on a big bay gelding with white stockings, was waiting on the Logan Pike, where the driveway of Calvert House swept into it.

"Do you know that you're riding Midge, and that she's a hard case?" she said ironically, as they cantered off together. "I'll bet you're thrown. Is she the horse the major reserved for you? Surely not."

"No," said Garrison plaintively, "they picked me out a cow—a nice, amiable cow; speedy as a traction-engine, and with as much action. This is a little better."

The girl was silent, eying him steadily through narrowed lids.

"You've never ridden before?"

"Um-m-m," said Garrison; "why, yes, I suppose so." He laughed in sudden joy. "It feels so good," he confided.

"You remind me of a person in a dream," she said, after a little, still watching him closely. "Nothing seems real to you—your past, I mean. You only think you have done this and that."

He was silent, biting his lip.

"Come on, I'll race you," she cried suddenly. "To that big poplar down there. See it? About two furlongs. I'll give you twenty yards' start. Don't fall off."

"I gave, never took, handicaps." The words came involuntarily to Garrison's surprise. "Come on; even up," he added hurriedly. "Ready?"

"Yes. Let her out."

The big bay gelding was off first, with the long, heart-breaking stride that eats up the ground. The girl's laugh floated back tantalizingly over her shoulder. Garrison hunched in the saddle, a smile on his lips. He knew the quality of the flesh under him, and that it would not be absent at the call.

"Tote in behind, girlie. He got the jump on you. That's it. Nip his heels." The seconds flew by like the trees; the big poplar rushed up. "Now, now. Make a breeze, make a breeze," sang out Garrison at the quarter minute; and like a long, black streak of smoke the filly hunched past the gelding, leaving it as if anchored. It was the old Garrison finish which had been track-famous once upon a time, and as Garrison eased up his hard-driven mount a queer feeling of exultation swelled his heart; a feeling which he could not quite understand.

"Could I have been a jockey once?" he kept asking himself over and over. "I wonder could I have been! I wonder!"

The next moment the gelding had ranged up alongside.

"I'll bet that was close to twenty-four, the track record," said Garrison unconsciously. "Pretty fair for dead and lumpy going, eh? Midge is a comer, all right. Good weight-carrying sprinter. I fancy that gelding. Properly ridden he would have given me a hard drive. We were even up on weight."

"And so you think I cannot ride properly!" said the girl quietly, arranging her wind-blown hair.

"Oh, yes. But women can't really ride class, you know. It isn't in them."

She laughed a little. "I'm satisfied now. You know I was at the Carter Handicap last year."

"Yes?" said Garrison, unmoved. He met her eyes fairly.

"Yes, you know Rogue, father's horse, won. They say Sis, the favorite, had the race, but was pulled in the stretch." She was smiling a little.

"Indeed?" murmured Garrison, with but indifferent interest.

She glanced at him sharply, then fell to pleating the gelding's mane. "Um-m-m," she added softly. "Billy Garrison, you know, rode Sis."

"Oh, did he?"

"Yes. And, do you know, his seat was identical with yours?" She turned and eyed him steadily.

"I'm flattered."

"Yes," she continued dreamily, the smile at her lips; "it's funny, of course, but Billy Garrison used to be my hero. We silly girls all have one."

"Oh, well," observed Garrison, "I dare say any number of girls loved Billy Garrison. Popular idol, you know——"

"I dare say," she echoed dryly. "Possibly the dark, clinging kind."

He eyed her wonderingly, but she was looking very innocently at a peregrinating chipmunk.

"And it was so funny," she ran on, as if she had not heard his observation nor made one herself. "Coming home in the train from the Aqueduct the evening of the handicap, father left me for a moment to go into the smoking-car. And who do you think should be sitting opposite me, two seats ahead, but—— Who do you think?" Again she turned and held his eyes.

"Why—some long-lost girl-chum, I suppose," said Garrison candidly.

She laughed; a laugh that died and was reborn and died again in a throaty gurgle. "Why, no, it was Billy Garrison himself. And I was being annoyed by a beast of a man, when Mr. Garrison got up, ordered the beast out of the seat beside me, and occupied it himself, saying it was his. It was done so beautifully. And he did not try to take advantage of his courtesy in the least. And then guess what happened." Still her eyes held his.

"Why," answered Garrison vaguely, "er—let me see. It seems as if I had heard of that before somewhere. Let me see. Probably it got into the papers—— No, I cannot remember. It has gone. I have forgotten. And what did happen next?"

"Why, father returned, saw Mr. Garrison raise his hat in answer to my thanks, and, thinking he had tried to scrape an acquaintance with me, threw him out of the seat. He did not recognize him."

"That must have been a little bit tough on Garrison, eh?" laughed Garrison idly. "Now that you mention it, it seems as if I had heard it."

"I've always wanted to apologize to Mr. Garrison, though I do not know him—he does not know me," said the girl softly, pleating the gelding's mane at a great rate. "It was all a mistake, of course. I wonder—I wonder if—if he held it against me!"

"Oh, very likely he's forgotten all about it long ago," said Garrison cheerfully.

She bit her lip and was silent. "I wonder," she resumed, at length, "if he would like me to apologize and thank him——" She broke off, glancing at him shyly.

"Oh, well, you never met him again, did you?" asked Garrison. "So what does it matter? Merely an incident."

They rode a furlong in absolute silence. Again the girl was the first to speak. "It is queer," she moralized, "how fate weaves our lives. They run along in threads, are interwoven for a time with others, dropped, and then interwoven again. And what a pattern they make!"

"Meaning?" he asked absently.

She tapped her lips with the palm of her little gauntlet.

"That I think you are absurd."

"I?" He started. "How? Why? I don't understand. What have I done now?"

"Nothing. That's just it."

"I don't understand."

"No? Um-m-m, of course it is your secret. I am not trying to force a confidence. You have your own reasons for not wishing your uncle and aunt to know. But I never believed that Garrison threw the Carter Handicap. Never, never, never. I—I thought you could trust me. That is all."

"I don't understand a word—not a syllable," said Garrison restlessly. "What is it all about?"

The girl laughed, shrugging her shoulders. "Oh, nothing at all. The return of a prodigal. Only I have a good memory for faces. You have changed, but not very much. I only had to see you ride to be certain. But

I suspected from the start. You see, I admit frankly that you *once* were my hero. There is only one Billy Garrison."

"I don't see the moral to the parable." He shook his head hopelessly.

"No?" She flushed and bit her lip. "William C. Dagget, you're Billy Garrison, and you know it!" she said sharply, turning and facing him. "Don't try to deny it. You are, are, *are!* I know it. You took that name because you didn't wish your relatives to know who you were. Why don't you 'fess up? What is the use of concealing it? You've nothing to be ashamed of. You should be proud of your record. I'm proud of it. Proud that—that—well, that I rode a race with you to-day. You're hiding your identity; afraid of what your uncle and aunt might say—afraid of that Carter Handicap affair. As if *we* didn't know you always rode as straight as a string." Her cheeks were flushed, her eyes flashing.

Garrison eyed her steadily. His face was white, his breath coming hot and hard. Something was beating—beating in his brain as if striving to jam through. Finally he shook his head.

"No, you're wrong. It's a case of mistaken identity. I am not Garrison."

Her gray eyes bored into his. "You really mean that—Billy?"

"I do."

"On your word of honor? By everything you hold most sacred? Take your time in answering."

"It wouldn't matter if I waited till the resurrection. I can't change myself. I'm not Garrison. Faith of a gentleman, I'm not. Honestly, Sue." He laughed a little nervously.

Again her gray eyes searched his. She sighed. "Of course I take your word."

She fumbled in her bosom and brought forth a piece of paper, carefully smoothing out its crumpled surface. Without a word she handed it to Garrison, and he spread it out on his filly's mane. It was a photograph of a jockey—Billy Garrison. The face was more youthful, care-free. Otherwise it was a fair likeness.

"You'll admit it looks somewhat like you," said Sue, with great dryness.

Garrison studied it long and carefully. "Yes—I do," he murmured, in a perplexed tone. "A double. Funny, isn't it? Where did you get it?" She laughed a little, flushing.

"I was silly enough to think you were one and the same, and that you wished to conceal your identity from your relatives. So I made occasion to steal it from the book your aunt was about to read. Remember? It was the leaf she thought the major had abstracted."

"I must thank you for your kindness, even though it went astray. May I have it?"

"Ye-es. And you are sure you are not the original?"

"I haven't the slightest recollection of being Billy Garrison," reiterated Billy Garrison, wearily and truthfully.

The ride home was mostly one of silence. Both were thinking. As they came within sight of Calvert House the girl turned to him:

"There is one thing you *can* do—ride. Like glory. Where did you more than learn?"

"Must have been born with me."

"What's bred in the bone will come out in the blood," she quoted enigmatically. She was smiling in a way that made Garrison vaguely uncomfortable.

CHAPTER VII.

Alone in his room that night Garrison endeavored to focus the stray thoughts, suspicions that the day's events had set running through his brain. All Sue Desha had said, and had meant without saying, had been photographed on the sensitized plate of his memory—that plate on which the negatives of the past were but filmy shadows. Now, of them all, the same Garrison was on the skyline of his imagination.

Could it be possible that Billy Garrison and he were one and the same? And then that incident of the train. Surely he had heard it before, somewhere in the misty long ago. It seemed, too, as if it had occurred coincidently with the moment he had first

looked into those gray eyes. He laughed nervously to himself.

"If I *was* Garrison, whoever he was, I wonder what kind of a person I was! They speak of him as if he had been some one—— And then Mrs. Calvert said he had disappeared. Perhaps I *am* Garrison."

Nervously he brought forth the page from the race-track annual Sue had given him, and studied it intently. "Yes, it does look like me. But it may be only a double; a coincidence." He racked his brain for a stray gleam of retrospect, but it was not forthcoming. "It's no use," he sighed wearily, "my life began when I left the hospital. And if I was Garrison, surely I would have been recognized by some one in New York.

"Hold on," he added eagerly, "I remember the first day I was out a man caught me by the arm on Broadway and said: 'Hello, Billy!' Let me think. This Garrison's name was Billy. The initials on my underwear were W. G.—might be William Garrison instead of the William Good I took. But if so, how did I come to be in the hospital without a friend in the world? The doctors knew nothing of me. Haven't I any parents or relatives—real relatives, not the ones I am imposing on?"

He sat on the bed endeavoring to recall some of his past life; even the faintest gleam. Then absently he turned over the photograph he held. On the reverse side of the leaf was the record of Billy Garrison. Garrison studied it eagerly.

"Born in eighty-two. Just my age, I guess—though I can't swear how old I am, for I don't know. Stable-boy for James R. Keene. Contract bought by Henry Waterbury. Highest price ever paid for bought-up contract. H'm! Garrison was worth something. First win on the Gravesend track when seventeen. A native of New York City. H'm! Rode two Suburban winners; two Brooklyn Handicaps; Carter Handicap; the Grand Prix, France; the Metropolitan Handicap; the English Derby—— Oh, shucks! I never did all those things; never in God's world," he grunted wearily. "I wouldn't be here if I had. It's all a mistake. I knew it was. Sue was kidding me. And yet—they say the real Billy Garrison has disappeared. That's funny, too."

He took a few restless paces about the room. "I'll go down and pump the major," he decided finally. "Maybe unconsciously he'll help me to remember. I'm in a fog. He ought to know Garrison. If I *am* Billy Garrison—then by my present rank deception I've queered a good record. But I know I'm not. I'm a nobody. A dishonest nobody to boot."

Major Calvert was seated by his desk in the great old-fashioned library, intently scanning various racing-sheets and the multitudinous data of the track. A greater part of his time went to the cultivation of his one hobby—the track and horses—for by reason of his financial standing, having large cotton and real-estate holdings in the State, he could afford to use business as a pastime.

He spent his mornings and afternoons either in his stables or at the extensive training-quarters of his stud, where he was as indefatigable a rail-bird as any pristine stable-boy.

A friendly rivalry had long existed between his neighbor and friend, Colonel Desha, and himself in the matter of horse-flesh. The colonel was from Kentucky—Kentucky origin—and his boast was that his native State could not be surpassed either in regard to the quality of its horses or women. And, though chivalrous, the colonel always mentioned "women" last.

"Just look at Rogue and my daughter, Sue, suh," he was wont to say with pardonable pride. "Thoroughbreds both, suh."

It was a matter of record that the colonel, though less financially able, was a better judge of horses than his friend and rival, the major, and at the various county meets it was Major Calvert who always ran second to Colonel Desha's first.

The colonel's faith in Rogue had been vindicated at the last Carter Handicap,

and his owner was now stimulating his ambition for higher flights. And thus far, the major, despite all his expenditures and lavish care, could only show one county win for his stable. His friend's success had aroused him, and deep down in his secret heart he vowed he would carry off the next prize Colonel Desha entered for, even if it was one of the classic handicaps itself.

Dixie, a three-year-old filly whom he had recently purchased, showed unmistakable evidences of winning class in her try-outs, and her owner watched her like a hawk, satisfaction in his heart, biding the time when he might at last show Kentucky that her sister State, Virginia, could breed a horse or two herself.

"I'll keep Dixie's class a secret," he was wont to chuckle to himself, as, perched on the rail in all sorts of weather, he clicked off her time. "I think it is the Carter my learned friend will endeavor to capture again. I'm sure Dixie can give Rogue five seconds in seven furlongs—and a beating. That is, of course," he always concluded, with good-humored vexation, "providing the colonel doesn't pick up in New York an animal that can give Dixie ten seconds. He has a knack of going from better to best."

Now Major Calvert glanced up with a smile as Garrison entered.

"I thought you were in bed, boy. Leave late hours to age. You're looking better these days. I think Doctor Blandly's open-air physic is first-rate, eh? By the way, Crimmins tells me you were out on Midge to-day, and that you ride—well, like Billy Garrison himself. Of course he always exaggerates, but you didn't say you could ride at all. Midge is a hard animal." He eyed Garrison with some curiosity. "Where did you learn to ride? I thought you had had no time nor means for it."

"Oh, I merely know a horse's tail from his head," laughed Garrison indifferently. "Speaking of Garrison, did you ever see him ride, major?"

"How many times have I asked you to say uncle, not major?" reproved Major Calvert. "Don't you feel as if you were my nephew, eh? If there's anything I've left undone——"

"You've been more than kind," blurted out Garrison uncomfortably. "More than good—uncle." He was hating himself. He could not meet the major's kindly eyes.

"Tut, tut, my boy, no fine speeches. Apropos of this Garrison, why are you so interested in him? Wish to emulate him, eh? Yes, I've seen him ride, but only once, when he was a bit of a lad. I fancy Colonel Desha is the one to give you his merits. You know Harrison's old owner, Mr. Waterbury, is returning with the colonel. He will be his guest for a week or so."

"Oh," said Garrison slowly. "And who is this Garrison riding for now?"

"I don't know. I haven't followed him. It seems as if I heard there was some disagreement or other between him and Mr. Waterbury; over that Carter Handicap, I think. By the way, if you take an interest in horses, and Crimmins tells me you have an eye for class, you rascal, come out to the track with me to-morrow. I've got a filly which I think will give the colonel's Rogue a hard drive. You know, if the colonel enters for the next Carter, I intend to contest it with him—and win." He chuckled.

"Then you don't know anything about this Garrison?" persisted Garrison slowly.

"Nothing more than I've said. He was a first-class boy in his time. A boy I'd like to have seen astride of Dixie. Such stars come up quickly and disappear as suddenly. The life's against them, unless they possess a hard head. But Mr. Waterbury, when he arrives, can, I dare say, give you all the information you wish. By the way," he added, a twinkle in his eye, "what do you think of the colonel's other thoroughbred? I mean Miss Desha?"

Garrison felt the hot blood mounting to his face. "I—I—that is, I—I like her. Very much indeed." He laughed awkwardly, his eyes on the parquet floor.

"I knew you would, boy. There's good blood in that girl—the best in the

States. Perhaps a little odd, eh? But, remember, straight speech means a straight mind. You see, the families have always been all in all to each other; the colonel is a school-chum of mine—we're never out of school in this world—and my wife was a nursery-chum of Sue's mother—she was killed on the hunting-field ten years ago. Your aunt and I have always regarded the girl as our own. God somehow neglected to give us a chick—probably we would have neglected Him for it. We love children. So we've cottoned all the more to Sue."

"I understand that Sue and I are intended for each other," observed Garrison, a half-cynical smile at his lips.

"God bless my soul! how did you guess?"

"Why, she said so."

Major Calvert chuckled. "God bless my soul again! That's Sue all over. She'd ask the devil himself for a glass of water if she was in the hot place, and insist upon having ice in it. 'Pon my soul she would. And what does she think of you? Likes you, eh?"

"No, she doesn't," replied Garrison quietly.

"Tell you as much, eh?"

"Yes."

Again Major Calvert chuckled. "Well, she told me different. Oh, yes, she did, you rascal. And I know Sue better than you do. Family wishes wouldn't weigh with her a particle if she didn't like the man. No, they wouldn't. She isn't the kind to give her hand where her heart isn't. She likes you. It remains with you to make her love you."

"And that's impossible," added Garrison grimly to himself. "If she only knew! Love? Lord!"

"Wait a minute," said the major, as Garrison prepared to leave. "Here's a letter that came for you to-day. It got mixed up in my mail by accident." He opened the desk-drawer and handed a square envelope to Garrison, who took it mechanically. "No doubt you've a good many friends up North," added the major kindly. "Have 'em down here for as long as they can stay. Calvert House is open night and day. I do not want you to think that because you are here you have to give up old friends. I'm generous enough to share you with them, but—no elopements, mind."

"I think it's merely a business letter," replied Garrison indifferently, hiding his burning curiosity. He did not know who his correspondent could possibly be. Something impelled him to wait until he was alone in his room before opening it. It was from the eminent lawyer, Theobald D. Snark.

BELOVED IMPOSTOR: *"Ars longa, vita brevis,"* as the philosopher has truly said, which in the English signifies that I cannot afford to wait for the demise of the reverend and guileless major before I garner the second fruits of my intelligence. Ten thousand is a mere pittance in New York—one's appetite develops with cultivation, and mine has been starved for years—and I find I require an income. Fifty a week or thereabouts will come in handy for the present. I know you have access to the major's pocketbook, it being situated on the same side as his heart, and I will expect a draft by following mail. He will be glad to indulge the sporting blood of youth. If I cannot share the bed of roses, I can at least fatten on the smell. I would hate to be compelled to tell the major what a rank fraud and unsurpassed liar his supposed nephew is. So good a liar that he even imposed upon me. Of course I thought you were the real nephew, and it horrifies me to know that you are a fraud. But, remember, silence is golden. If you feel any inclination of getting fussy, remember that I am a lawyer, and that I can prove I took your claim in good faith. Also, the Southerners are notoriously hot-tempered, deplorably addicted to firearms, and I don't think you would look a pretty sight if you happened to get shot full of buttonholes.

The letter was unsigned, typewritten, and on plain paper. But Garrison knew whom it was from. It was the eminent lawyer's way not to place damaging evidence in the hands of a prospective enemy.

"This means blackmail," commented Garrison, carefuly replacing the letter in its envelope. "And it serves me right. I wonder do I look silly. I must; for people take me for a fool."

TO BE CONCLUDED IN THE NEXT NUMBER.

The Keepers of Dargah

By O. C. Tobey

Not always are modern inventions blessings. In O. C. Tobey's clever story the arrival in an out-of-the-way corner of the globe of a product of recent years has the most amazing results. Incidentally, a long-standing feud is brought to an abrupt conclusion

UP above the gates of the Kyber, a few hundred feet nearer the stars, is the Pass of Dargah, a transverse cut in one of the crests of the Himalayas. On the southern end of this gash in the rocks the territory is British; at the northern end it belongs to the Russians.

Between the two ends is debatable ground, over which neither power will permit the other to exercise sovereignty, and concerning which the natives have a feeling of superstitious reverence that has, as it were, made of this narrow cut a place to tread with unshod feet, because *he* and his fellows keep it.

He? Who? The-Man-Who Will-Not-Rest-in-His-Grave, if offense be given; again, the Man-Who-Will-Not-Stay-Dead. His name is Dick Stanton, or, rather, it *was;* for he died not more than a twelvemonth since, full of honors and years, in his own home in far-off England. But to the men who called him "Sahib" he died at the hands of the Red Mullah half a century since, and then, instead of staying dead, came back and defeated them at the bridge.

Of a verity, this is so. The Pathans vow it on the beard of Mahmoud. And not only did he come back from his grave and thrash them into docility, but, before he died again, did he not promise to repeat his resurrection, again and yet again, until time no more is, if one of his men *dared* even so little as wish to forget that his sahib was a soldier of the white girl-queen at Windsor, across the black seas?

Where Dick Stanton held the pass until help came from the English end and the men of the Red Mullah were defeated with woful slaughter, another slit in the rocks cuts the place of the "Keepers" like the vertical part of a recumbent cross, and is formed by a mountain stream that, age after age, fed by the eternal snows of the Russian peaks a few hundred feet nearer the floor of heaven, has worked and worked, lowering its bed, particle by particle, till now it foams across the Pass of Dargah, far down below the bed of the roadway, and great slabs of masonry bridge it.

From this bridge the mountain stream is seen coming down the valley like a line of milky spray; under the bridge it roars, and then winds away, with many a lengthy leap, into the woods toward the plains, far down below the clouds.

At the Russian end of the pass there is a fort to guard the Russian interests up in these parts of the Himalayas. The name by which it is known is the St. Maria, and its garrison do little between drills but play games with cards and dice, or stroll over to the weather bureau and bother the official in charge.

At the English end of the pass, down the hill, the garrison also play cards and dice, but it has no weather bureau. Instead, it has a village of particularly nasty Pathans, among whom the Red Mullah has grown old and full of senile maliciousness—a veritable bundle of unexpected evil possibilities, enclosed in a tall, lean, withered frame, like a lanky mummy quickened with evil vitality.

In other days the Red Mullah used to live in a village up on Russian territory, but, having stolen certain stock on the hoof belonging to the Russians and held high revel on the remains of the same, he had fled to British territory and become the valet of Dick Stanton.

In those days Dick was just recovering from the pangs of a broken engagement, and had not yet even thought of taking the queen's shilling and becoming a soldier.

No. Dick was up here in the hills to convert the heathen; but the heathen, represented by his valet, had, owing to previous religious impressions, made up his mind to convert Dick to *his* way of thinking.

So when Dick, after flattering himself that he had won the confidence of this interesting young barbarian who had such a record as a cattle-thief, though scarcely out of his teens, tried to deliver to his servitor the message of salvation, the renowned youth tried to explain that Dick was the one who was in need of spiritual light.

Not contented with his efforts to make a convert of Dick, Abadullah formed the distressing habit of praying for his master whenever he thought of it, sometimes in the middle of the night, at other times when Dick was writing home or mooning over his lost lady's letters, treasured to gloom over and keep himself consistently unhappy—for Dick at parting had promised her to never smile again.

So neither master nor man saved a brand from the burning, but, instead, developed a vast and wonderful desire to make a good man out of each other, though after different ideals.

One night while Dick wrote and Abadullah, within sound of the scratching of Dick's pen, howled prayers for his master's salvation, Dick's patience reached its limit. Dropping his pen, he went forth and fell upon his valet, thrashing him until the devout Abadullah professed himself a Christian, and no longer concerned for Dick's spiritual welfare.

But at the first opportunity Abadullah became a heathen again, stabbed Dick, and sped forth, his way leading him back to the village from which he had fled because of his prowess as a thief.

Before him was the danger of being punished for his purloining of the cattle; behind him was a dead man for the slaying of whom he had imperiled his neck.

So Abadullah turned aside and became a hermit until sufficiently ragged, dirty, and unclean to become a saint. Then he made his reappearance, and talked the extermination of their white enemies. He bade his followers do as he had been guilty of doing: kill for religion's sake those who wouldn't be converted.

So, guided by Abadullah, who was wrapped in a red horse-cloth, the tribe to which he belonged went on the loot. Other tribes followed their example, and Abadullah, now called the "Mullah," spread woe, and gathered loot, all along the border, and was much hated by both English and Russians.

But one day the Red Mullah's star deserted him, or was eclipsed. He attempted to lead his followers through the cut called Dargah Pass, and lo! as he came to the bridge, Dick Stanton—who was dead and buried many years since—arose up from the earth and barred his way, while certain other Englishmen, who were out of sight behind a bend in the roadway, went for help.

Then Dick Stanton's ghost, fighting with the white men, avenged Dick's death so thoroughly that Dick's name became a thing to conjure with.

Said Dick Stanton, telling about his meeting with the Red Mullah at the bridge and the events that had occurred between their parting and this meeting:

"You see, I didn't understand just how anxious the beggar was to convert me; so I wouldn't be converted. Therefore, he tried to make an angel of me. That sickened me of missionary work, getting stabbed by my most promising convert, so I went home, got through Sandhurst, came back, and got assigned to border work that I might get the chance to square things with Abadullah.

"One day we met. The good Abadullah nearly fell off his horse and died at the sight of me. Seeing how he was overcome by the apparition, of course I didn't take any pains to undeceive the beggar. I just sat still on my horse and grinned at him. While he was pinching himself to see if he were awake, my companions, Carey and Darnell, ran back to the fort and got help.

"I didn't do anything heroic. It was the old chap's bad conscience that held him spellbound and dumb, until it was too late to get away. And—oh, yes! there was a heroine to the tale, don't you know; the girl I made my wife. The Mullah had captured her and her little brother not more than half an hour before, and we recaptured her. She was a missionary's daughter.

"Now, stop grinning! I really had been courting her for months, but she wouldn't have me because I was a reformed missionary who'd rather make angels than save souls.

"When, however, I took her away from the Pathan, who designed to make her one of his harem, she admitted that, under given conditions, a man of warlike tendencies had his uses, and consented to be mine.

"In the fracas I received a bullet that nearly laid me out; but before I left and went down to Simla I had an interview with the Red Mullah, and the promises I made him were enough to curdle his blood. It made of Dargah a haunted place, of which even the Mullah was afraid, for, you know, he really couldn't get it out of his head that I had been dead all those years I was back home recovering my health and getting through Sandhurst.

"Well, the bullet ended my life as a soldier; and about that time, too, I came into the title; and so died again. Our colonel told the Mullah that I was dead, but that he must look out for me, as I was bad magic and might take it into my head to return and make him sing small.

"Not much of a yarn—just illustrates the point Kipling makes that creatures like the Mullah are, well, good food for powder; half devils, half children, treacherous, superstitious, utterly useless in the scheme of things unless dead and buried!"

So Dick ended his story.

Some fifty years later the second Dick Stanton got through Sandhurst and found himself billeted for the mysterious East.

"Hope you get up in the hills," said the first Dick. "If Abadullah is living, tell him to be careful how he behaves, as I am watching his ways, and all I want is an excuse to return and scare him to death."

The younger Dick Stanton's first letter home contained this information:

> Abadullah is alive, and he has your message. I did not get a chance to deliver it myself, but my friend, Phil Dade, who has been sent up to Dargah, says he will deliver it to Abadullah himself, for the sake of seeing the old rascal squirm at the prospect of your resurrection.

Two or three years later, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and five, to be more accurate, the viceroy of that part of his majesty's dominions known as the "East" had been for some time explaining to the home government that up around Fort Dargah there were signs of trouble in the air and whispers of an uprising to be feared.

As spring advanced the viceroy's statements became more definite. The tribes were preparing to avenge some real or fancied grievance, and were being incited thereto by that wily old villain, the Red Mullah. At least, that was what Captain Dade thought. He had no positive evidence against the Mullah; but that the heathen were becoming impudent and uneasy was a fact, and probably that the Mullah was responsible for their discontent was also a fact.

Captain Dade, who about a year before had made the second Dick Stanton's sister Mrs. Phillip Dade, sent to Dick to come up from Simla and take Mrs. Dade out of harm's way. He told her how to collect his life insurance, and how to invest it, gave her a letter to his lawyer, and otherwise prepared to be butchered like "an officer and a gentleman." But Mrs. Dade absolute-

ly refused to go, and, instead, coaxed Dick to get transferred to the hills that he might help to defend her.

Then the garrison settled down to await the flowering of the trouble then in bud—not without hope, however, for the Red Mullah was an old man, and Divine Providence, by cutting short his lessening days, might remove the source of their disquietude.

Years before, in a more peaceful time, the Russians had established, not half a mile from Fort Dargah as the birds fly, but miles away by the bridle-path, the weather bureau: a tall building built on a ledge overlooking the mountain stream on one side, with the other side close against the walls of Fort St. Maria.

From this station, not as a matter of international courtesy but of personal good feeling, heliographic messages slid down the course of the mountain stream to the rocks at the bridge at sunset each day, telling whether stormy weather was anticipated or skies were fair on Russian territory.

And, as a matter of personal receptivity, there was always some one at the bridge to catch the import of the flashes. Possibly both the Russian and the English Governments should have objected to this, but—probably because it was such a desolate place up among the hills, and far away from the rest of the world—the governments saw no reason why such a slight favor could not be given by one nation's officers and received by another's without censure or comment.

Professor Sergius Ivanoff was in charge of the weather bureau, and it would have been absurd to have regarded with suspicious eyes his efforts to be courteous, for he was a most honorable old gentleman, and at one time had been a member of the czar's own household.

If he wanted to flash weather rĕports down the valley to the "Place of the Keepers," it was all right, from the Russian point of view; if one of those young Englishmen happened to be at the bridge, it really didn't matter; it was "a very harmless bit of nonsense," said both governments. Nonsense? Yes; for of what interest were the weather reports to those who had experienced the weather?

The professor's household consisted of a few essential servants and his helper, Sikander, a Pathan caught when young and tamed at the Mission, now a quiet, meek-eyed, not overly truthful youth, who was afraid to touch the heliograph, and kept because he was very respectful and too much afraid of the instruments to meddle with them, too much of a liar to have been believed had he been able to handle the instruments and talk about them.

About the time the younger Dick Stanton came up to Fort Dargah, Vera Ivanoff came down from Irkutsk to Fort St, Maria; and her father, instead of being agreeably surprised, regarded her as the most unlucky of girls to make her appearance at this time, when the air was full of rumors of an uprising—anyway, she was well enough off with her aunt in Irkutsk.

The day after Vera came the professor hurt his hand, and then he forgave his daughter for appearing, for she was not afraid of the heliograph, and was willing to learn to handle any or all of his instruments; besides, he could trust her.

"My dear Eleanor," said Dick Stanton the younger, to his sister one night about a month later, "you know we have been wondering what ailed that nice old man up the gorge who sends us weather reports; why he, of late, sometimes got things mixed. He has an angel to assist him, and she is just learning how."

"His daughter," Eleanor informed her brother. "My ayah told me about her."

"And you didn't tell me!" her brother reproached her. "And not another white woman up here above the clouds for a fellow to flirt with!"

"She may be betrothed to some one else—I mean to some one somewhere else, or to some member of the other garrison."

"How you do mix your statements, Nell!" Dick exclaimed. "But, admitting there may be some sense in your

tangled suppositions, sister mine, the other fellow is not here, or we would have heard that she had come to be near her lover. He is not here. I *am*. I purpose to get over there before very long and start the game of hearts."

Up in the Himalayas miles are not half so lengthy as rods in the lowland cities, and it was not long before Dick found an excuse to visit Fort St. Maria; not long before Vera, properly guarded, came down to Fort Dargah to make the acquaintance of Mrs. Dade and the baby; and then Dick found a path that made the distance even less than Don Cupid's shortening of the rocky miles.

About this time, across the world, in the city of New York, a certain Professor Ivanoff—possibly a distant relative of Professor Sergius Ivanoff—who had made for himself a reputation as an exhibitor of novelties to instruct and amuse the public, was requested by a vitascope firm to call and see a new set of films just finished—a new machine just right for a man in the business followed by the great Professor Ivanoff.

This new machine, so the letter stated, was, in a sense, an invention quite new. True, it had the outward form of all other vitascopes, but it had been especially designed for use in small towns where neither gas nor electricity was obtainable.

Certain chemicals combined under water to produce an electric spark, which, in turn, liberated other chemicals combined in a vacuum; and the result was a wonderful white pearly glow without heat, better for this one purpose than anything yet discovered.

They would sell Professor Ivanoff the machine and fifty films, his own selections, very reasonably, to introduce the new lighting apparatus.

Professor Ivanoff called upon the firm and was conducted to the exhibition-room to make an inspection of the machine they wished him to purchase, and to look over the films.

The machine was not at all complicated-looking. All the operator had to do was to put in the film—so!—attach two wires to two clasps—so!—add a little water to each bottle of chemicals—so!—the light flamed forth, the films commenced to unroll the stories pictured thereon, as Professor Ivanoff said: "Ash big ash life and twice again ash nadural."

There were pictures of bull-fights, of stage-robberies, of flying trains, of games at Athens, of a Western cattle-ranch at branding-time; and, last, but not least, there was a scene from a play called "The Cherry-pickers."

As represented on the stage, the scene depicts a rocky defile, called by courtesy on the bills a pass. It might have been a pass in the Rockies or the Andes as well as in the Himalayas. It was a very non-committal piece of scenery, to be sure—utterly devoid of local color. But unquestionably it was a split in the rocks, and that was all the stage-manager may have considered essential.

In the middle of the stage stands the hero, with sword frantically slashing the atmosphere, on his face an expression of noble accepted martyrdom.

Over the rocks behind him pour the troops coming to his rescue, around him the Pathans lie in heaps of dead and dying. The foe is falling back, the heroine rushes to his arms, and the enemy is routed in a most thrilling tableau, representing the hero getting ready to expire to the tremulous quavers of the violins down in the orchestra.

Professor Ivanoff, of New York, rubbed his hands together in ecstasy when he beheld this scene move across the curtain.

"Ach!" he gasped, "ain'd it superb? An' de colors! Dey vas ash peutiful ash life, if not some more so, but—it vas so still, like ghosts!—ghosts!—dead ghosts! Let us attach a phonograph to the thing vot will play tunes to fit the pictures, eh?"

"We have another scene," explained the proprietors, "that has never before been presented to the public. We would appreciate it if you would accept this film, professor. It was secured in Rawal Pindi, and represents the annual procession held to commemorate the deaths

of two grandsons of Mahomet—Hasson and Haussen. It is an extremely impressive scene, Professor Ivanoff. And in regard to the phonographic attachment, it is a good idea, a very good idea, a suggestion we are pleased to accept."

So the phonographic attachment was made, and the proper films and cylinders paired and packed. Then Professor Ivanoff, of New York, signed the contracts, paid what was asked, and directed that the machine and films be delivered to him in a few days, inside of a week, if possible, as he was going to take it to England in the spring and return with it to the States not sooner than the fall. His steamer left port on the seventeenth, and as it was now the tenth, there was need for haste.

About this time, or, more accurately, about three months before this time, up at Fort St. Maria, at the weather bureau, the heliograph commenced to go to pieces. The Professor Ivanoff up at Fort St. Maria notified the proper authorities that his heliograph was going to pieces like the one-hoss shay—or words to the same effect.

He followed this, a day or two later, by the statement that an entirely new machine should be provided, as the old machine would soon be beyond all possibility of repairing, even were the most skilful mechanic in St. Petersburg dispatched at once to deal with it.

So the proper officer at St. Petersburg ordered a new machine from Paris. But the maker of such instruments in Paris, being out of the machines desired, cabled to a firm in the States for one of their machines. The two contrivances—the heliograph and the vitascope—were not so very unlike each other when packed for transportation; the shipping-clerk got the two boxes mixed, and *then* was the beginning of the end.

As the gentleman in St. Petersburg was in a hurry, the box was not disturbed on its arrival in Paris, for the Frenchmen knew the quality of the work on the machine and an inspection would have been merely a formality. The gentleman in St. Petersburg, being in such haste, the formality was omitted.

The official at St. Petersburg, having received several further statements meantime from Professor Sergius Ivanoff regarding the rapid rusting and decaying of his instrument, took it for granted that the instrument was the one required, and hurried it on toward its final destination.

When the other Professor Ivanoff, the man who was expecting to receive a vitascope, unpacked the heliograph, the language he used was, to say the least, unprofessorial.

The day the camel-drivers and the escort of troopers delivered the vitascope and its attachments to Professor Sergius Ivanoff, at Fort St. Maria, the old heliograph collapsed. Had Professor Ivanoff but known it, the old heliograph had been a very good machine of its kind, and should have lasted for years, but Sikander, obeying the orders of the Mullah in fear and trembling, had been secretly doing his best to destroy all the destructible parts of the heliograph.

His master blamed the altitude, the latitude, and the weather for the destruction of the machine, for Sikander could not be induced to even touch the heliograph in his presence. It is doubtful whether if Sikander's fears of the Mullah had not been more potent than his fears of the "Thing of Mysterious Flashes," he would have touched it when alone with it; but very much afraid of the Mullah was Sikander.

The Mullah intended to have an uprising of the tribes and a general slaughter of the whites on the anniversary of the death of the grandsons of Mahomet, and he did not intend to have that heliograph discover his plots, by some of its flashes, and then betray him.

To destroy the telegraph and telephone-wires was an easier task and very quickly accomplished; therefore it could be delayed up to the last moment. But the Mullah understood less of the "Thing that Talked by Flashes of Light," so he thought it wise to dispose

of that as quickly as possible, at any time that presented itself favorably to Sikander.

As the time drew near for the hour of the slaughtering of the white men, the Mullah commenced to get nervous, and was afraid of other things quite as harmless as the heliograph; so, one night his friends, at his earnest request, muffled him in the remains of the original red horse-cloth that had given him his title, and smuggled him over the bridge into Russian territory, to get him away from the English.

The first Dick Stanton, being an Englishman, if he kept his promise and came back from the dead, would surely come to the English who had brought the Mullah his messages, and the Englishmen would tell him: "He's down below in the village." Then he would not dare to go on with his schemes, the Man-Who-Would-Not-Stay-Dead being against him.

The men who were escorting the Mullah to a place of concealment met the men bringing the vitascope and its attachments about a mile just the other side of Fort St. Maria, and described themselves as merchants coming home after a trading trip through the valley below.

Sikander, who was with the party in charge of the instrument supposed to be a heliograph, called after the traders certain words that, translated, meant: "We have here another of the things that talks by flashes of light. Better be careful."

"What did you say?" asked the officer in charge of the cortège.

"I said," explained Sikander, "that I hoped they had had a profitable trip."

"It looks as though they were fairly successful," replied the officer. "Only one horse had a load, and that looked like a woman well muffled from our profane eyes."

Although the evening was well advanced when the boxes arrived, Professor Ivanoff had the old heliograph taken down at once and the new instrument unpacked to put in its place for use on the morrow.

Then he discovered that the new machine was no more like the other one than a touring-car is like a push-cart. But, by following the printed instructions that accompanied it, he ascertained the fact that this machine was of American construction, a consideration that accounted for much.

Still, sorely puzzled was he to know what sort of improvements the government had been making to necessitate the use of cylinders and films instead of reflectors. Vera, who had come in to see the new machine, was of the opinion that the contrivance was not even intended to be used as a heliograph; that some one somewhere had made a mistake.

"We are to put one of the films on here," the professor said. "And one of the cylinders on here." The film was the one depicting the annual funeral procession held in honor of the grandsons of Mahomet. The cylinder contained the "Dead March in Saul."

"You attach these wires to *this*, put some water in *these*," mumbled the professor. "Then——" Then, a long moment of suspense, the parts of the contrivance before them began to whizz and click, and a flaming rainbow, flashing down the valley, smote against the bridge of the "Keepers" and the rocks, as against a curtain of velvet.

Out of the spot of light a Mohammaden priest came stalking, leading a white horse, followed by a crowd of weeping people who made no audible sound, at least at the bridge, but who expressed the keenest anguish by their gestures.

"Keys of Saint Peter!" gasped Professor Ivanoff, "am I mad, and imagine——"

"No, dear," said Vera. "I told you some one had made a mistake; now we are sure of it."

Whiz—whir—went the vitascope, hurrying through its work at lightning speed. Sikander seized a pitcher of water to extinguish the source of its infernal energy, but thereby only increased it.

"I think," said Vera, "that this is a moving-picture machine. I have read about such machines. They are a recent invention."

"Whatever it is," the professor said, "it is of no value to us up here."

Just then Sikander stepped through the reflector of the heliograph.

"We'll *have* to make it do," said Vera. "We will look it over again in the morning."

By this time the films were exhausted. Vera took out the drenched and ruined strip of pictures. Down the valley the long white light played upon the bridge of the "Keepers," and back in the darkness certain hillmen cowered and mumbled prayers, and begged that they might be preserved from the awful consequences of being present when such a vision became manifest.

"It can mean but one thing," said they to one another. "That Heaven is with the holy Mullah! We must turn back and tell him what we have looked upon!"

The Mullah heard of the miracle with mingled emotions. To him, as to his followers, it now seemed that Heaven must be with him, for had not the vision appeared at the place of the "Keepers"? Was not the Prophet nearer to Allah and more potent than Dick Stanton? And this was the sign.

"Go forth," he bade his followers, "and arouse those who sleep! The Prophet is our leader to-night. We will not keep him awaiting us until the dawn, but will arise and follow him, now, this very hour."

The stars were glowing with the strange intent brightness that precedes the dawn when Professor Ivanoff was awakened, to find the night made hideous with the sounds of firearms being discharged, yells, and shouts.

Sikander was shaking him, and Vera, assisting Sikander to awaken her father, was evidently on the verge of insanity from fear.

Between Sikander's statements and Vera's disconnected exclamations, the professor finally understood that not only was the fort in the hands of the Red Mullah, but already were the wild followers of the old reprobate trying to force an entrance into his watch-tower.

"I opened the gate and let them in," wailed Sikander. "I am the vile sinner. They promised not to come here and harm you and yours, but they have lied. They are at the door. Flee by the way of the goat-path by which the young Englishman comes to see the lady of his love."

The professor was well-beloved by his personal servants. They were willing to betray the Russian Government but not the professor; so, while Sikander got him up and out of harm's way, they held back the Mullah and his followers by locking all the doors through which he must pass to gain an entrance to the professor's apartments. Open resistance they dared not use, but they could make him pause a moment or two at each door, to give Sikander the more time to get their master and the girl out of the way.

"Nay, I believe you not," said the Mullah to the tale told by Sikander to account for the disappearance of the professor and his daughter. "The man you served is undoubtedly very bad magic, but you are the son of a talker of lies, and I believe you have helped them to escape, these two unbelievers! Tie him, my sons, to that fire thing of evil, and when we come back, having slain those below, we will settle with this traitor."

Whereupon Sikander was seized and bound to one of the legs of the vitascope and left in charge of a score or two of his kinsman and friends, while the Mullah went forth again to spread destruction.

"O thou son of a clucking hen and a brother to the wild ass!" his father abjured him, "to open thy mouth and deliver his prey from the favorite of the Prophet!"

"O thou twin of the crow! thou blood-brother of the parrot!" his other kinsmen cursed him.

"I am as innocent as a babe just born," firmly declared Sikander. "You see this new machine. It is not like the fire-machine, it is the most evil of all bad magic—it talks!"

He was not sure but that the machine might attempt to defend itself against this baseless accusation, but he had to risk the perilous possibility. The vita

scope did not, at the moment, look half so ugly as Sikander's father, who, sitting scowling and fingering his long, keen hunting-knife, suddenly turned and demanded:

"Then why does it not talk to us?"

"It needs a drink of water, with something about it twisted, to make it talk," explained Sikander. "But I cannot give it voice unless you free me."

Sikander had an idea that it might take a fancy to talk, whether he were bound or freed, but he did not want to be so close to it as he was, should it chance to feel a desire to deny the slander he had fastened upon it.

So his kinsfolks unbound him, and, trembling with fear of the machine as well as of his guards, in self-defense Sikander must do something to pacify his indignant captors, or take the consequences. He put in a cylinder and a film as he had seen Vera adjust them—the first two that came to hand, the music intended to accompany a film depicting a review of the National Guard, and the battle-scene being from "The Cherry-pickers."

"Now I am about to give it drink," said Sikander, with chattering teeth. "Flee ye, if it is offended, or abide at your peril! The moment of its willingness to make speech approaches—it is about to give forth words——"

He was turning first this knob, then that, not remembering the particular knob the professor had pushed, turned, or otherwise moved.

Suddenly, with a rattle and hissing crackle, the shutters flew open, a sword of light clove the darkness, and, shooting forth into the night, smote upon the place of the "Keepers."

The cylinder began to reel forth the rollicking strains of the latest vaudeville hit, and the films began to reveal the first movements from the scene from "The Cherry-pickers."

Meanwhile, Professor Ivanoff and Vera, guided by the stable-boy, who knew the way and had been detailed to act as their guide by Sikander, were pressing forward as rapidly as they could in the starlit darkness. But the way was steep, and their progress was less rapid than that of the Mullah and his followers, coming down the roadway to level and loot Fort Dargah.

As they came within sound of the waterfall, there dashed over the bridge a soldier from Fort St. Maria, a fugitive, with tidings of a massacre from which he believed he only had escaped.

"They are dead behind me; all dead," he told the men at Fort Dargah. "Some one opened the gate, and, taken by surprise, we made little or no resistance. Yes, to be sure, some sentry must have slept—perhaps they all slept or were murdered at their posts by traitors within the walls. Fort St. Maria is now but a place of the dead."

Just as the fugitives from the weather bureau came out upon the ledge, below which was the roadway just above the bridge, from the direction of Fort Dargah came the rushing of hurrying cavalrymen; and from the other way came the muffled thundering of the mounts of the Mullah and his men.

"Dick!" Vera called, as the English rushed by below them. Dick heard and checked his mare, letting the others go by and crash into the Mullah's down-rushing mob.

She was just on a level with Dick's head, was Dick's sweetheart; her father handed her down to Dick's arms, and dropped to the ground after her.

"Run!" cried Dick.

And the professor and the stable-boy, staying not on the order of their going, fled for the bridge, for the Mullah was turning the defensive attack into a retreat, and yard by yard the English were giving back what had been gained by the first rush.

"This isn't for you alone, dear," Dick explained hurriedly. "If those devils get by the bridge——"

He kissed her and gave her into the arms of one of his comrades, who, wounded, was trying to get back out of the press; then Dick got his baptism of fire.

"Allah il Allah!" shrieked the Mullah.

And down went the horse of the trooper carrying Vera. The trooper

handed the girl to one of his fellows, and fled on foot. Dade and Dick came together for a moment in the struggling masses of men and animals. The English were giving back before the mob of bloodthirsty fanatics more and more rapidly. Now the bridge was gained, and the retreat was becoming a rout.

"We may as well say good-by, Dick," Dade shouted.

"Couldn't, couldn't possibly!" Dick made him answer. "Got to live——"

When, lo! through the fading darkness a flame came like a white glow and lit up the place about them and the bridge. To the men of the Mullah it fell as it were from above, and in the light a great picture formed, through which the astonished English could be seen staring at him as through a many-colored mist, like men made senseless with the wonder of it!

And the picture that formed in front of the English and about them—it was the picture of a large, fair man, not wholly unlike the first Dick Stanton, being fair and tall, wide of shoulder, and long of limb.

He was standing over a dead hillman, silent and stern, with sword aloft and his eyes fairly flaming with anger. Around him other gigantic shapes, in the uniforms of the English, rushed out from behind the rocks with fixed bayonets to charge the Mullah and his men.

Then the Mullah remembered the promise of the other Dick Stanton!

He slipped sideways in his saddle and covered his face with his hands for a moment, cowering away from this visitant from the "beyond." The men behind him, no longer able to await the coming of the great bright figures rushing toward them—the horrible, still, tremendous figures—forsook him and fled, howling.

The Mullah slid out of his saddle and looked again. The wraith of the other Dick Stanton was approaching him with long, swinging leaps—it was upon him—he flung out his withered arms in terror to hold it back.

"Sahib!" he howled. "Sahib, thy God hath conquered!"

Then the shape was gone, the other shapes, the light from which they had emerged; and the Mullah settled forward on his face in the dust—defeated, smitten, everlastingly subdued.

"What do you suppose it was?" the English asked one another.

After a little the other Dick Stanton moved forward to where the Mullah sprawled, and turned him over.

"The old rascal is dead," he announced. "Whatever it was, it has rid us of the Red Mullah."

Later on, in the just dawning day, the English learned what it was.

"O wonder-workers," Sikander explained, "the Thing you saw came out of this new machine that talks! I set it going to appease my foes, who doubted the truth of a certain lie I told about the machine. When it had sung sufficiently to fill them with terror, I grasped these two things to shut it off, when, behold! it took hold of me and spat fire into me. I roared, and my people took hold of me to release me from the evil contrivance, but it would not let me loosen my hold upon it. Instead, it also held fast to my father and to my other kinsfolks; nor could we release ourselves or give over clinging to one another until the machine kicked itself to pieces; then we fled. There were more than a legion of devils in that contrivance, sahibs; but the thing that slew the Mullah came forth from the machine, not down from the stars. It may have been that it was packed away in the machine, and I released it, to go back to the stars; but one thing is certain, sahibs, I work no more for people who can pack ghosts in boxes that sing. I go back to my own people, for, mayhap, in the next box you English will have the Mullah packed, and he will deal with me as the Other dealt with him. Don't you think there is danger of it, sahibs? Another thing that is certain: never again will we brave the promise of the 'One and his Fellows,' who has Dargah in his keeping. For now, of a verity, we know he will keep the promises he made. We know, sahibs—and when one knows, sahibs?"

The Man of Secrets

By William Le Queux

Author of "Secrets of the Foreign Office," "The Tickencote Treasure," Etc.

In these modern times of breathless hurry and great monopolies, when fortunes are made in a day and credit is lost in an hour, men's secrets are sometimes very remarkable. It is one such secret that is here revealed; one that will, we anticipate, both startle and puzzle the reader. Mr. Le Queux is a master of this kind of fiction—"the most resourceful of all the mystery writers," as he has been aptly termed. In "The Man of Secrets" he is at his best.

CHAPTER I.

THE STRANGER IN MANCHESTER.

EAD! And he's carried his secret with him to his grave!"

"Never!"

"But he has. Look! His jaw has dropped. Can't you see the change, man?"

"Then he's carried out his threat, after all!"

"By Heaven, he has! We've been fools, Reggie—utter idiots," I whispered.

"So it seems. I confess that I fully expected he'd tell us the truth when he knew that the end had really come."

"Ah, you didn't know him as I did!" I remarked bitterly. "He had a will of iron and a nerve of steel."

"Combined with the constitution of a horse; else he'd have been dead long ago. But we've been outwitted—cleanly outwitted by a dying man. He defied us, laughed at our ignorance to the very last."

"Blair was no fool. He knew what knowledge of the truth meant to us—a huge fortune. So he simply kept his secret."

"And left us in penniless chagrin. Well, although we've lost thousands, Gilbert, I can't help admiring his dogged determination. He went through a lot, recollect, and he's been a good friend to us—*very* good—so I suppose we really oughtn't to abuse him, however much we regret that he didn't let us into his secret."

"Ah, if only those white lips could speak! One word, and we'd both be rich men," I said, in regret, gazing upon the still, gray face, with its closed eyes and closely clipped beard, lying there upon the pillow.

"He intended to hold his secret from the very first," remarked my tall friend, Reginald Seton, folding his arms as he stood on the opposite side of the bed. "It isn't given to every man to make such a discovery as he made. It took him years to solve the problem, whatever it was; but that he really succeeded in doing so we can't for a moment doubt."

"And his profit was over a million sterling."

"More like two, at the very lowest estimate. Recollect how, when we first knew him, he was in dire want of a sovereign—and now? Why, only last week he gave twenty thousand to the hospital fund; and all as the result of solving the enigma which for so long we have tried to discover in vain. No, Gilbert, he hasn't given us a square deal. We assisted him, put him on his legs, and all that; and instead of re-

vealing to us the key to the secret which he discovered, and which placed him among the wealthiest men in London, he pointblank refused to open his lips on the subject, even though he knew that he must die. We lent him money in the old days, financed him, kept Mab at school when he had no funds, and——"

"And he repaid us every penny—with interest," I finished. "Come, don't let's discuss him here. The secret is lost forever; that's enough." And I drew the sheet over the dead face—the countenance of Burton Blair, the man who, during the past five years, had been one of London's mysteries.

A strange, adventurous life, a career more remarkable, perhaps, than half those imagined by writers of romance, had been brought abruptly to an end, while the secret of the source of his enormous wealth—the secret which we both had longed to share for the past five years, because we were, in a sense, justly entitled to participate in its advantages—had gone with him to that bourne whence no traveler returns.

The apartment in which we stood was a small, rather well-furnished bedroom in the Queen's Hotel, Manchester. The window looked out upon the dark façade of the infirmary, while to that chamber of the dead there came the roar and bustle of the traffic in Piccadilly.

The light of the cheerless February afternoon was quickly fading, and as we turned softly to descend and inform the hotel manager of the fatal termination of the seizure, I noticed that the dead man's suit-case stood in the corner, and that his keys were still in it.

"We had better take possession of these," I remarked, locking the bag and transferring the small bunch to my pocket. "His executors will want them."

Then we closed the door behind us, and going to the office imparted the unwelcome intelligence that a death had occurred in the hotel. The manager was, however, quite prepared to learn such news, for, half an hour before, the doctor had declared that the stranger could not live. His case had been hopeless from the very first.

Briefly, the facts were as follows: Burton Blair had bidden his daughter Mabel farewell, left his house in Grosvenor Square on the previous morning, and had taken the ten-thirty express from London to Manchester, where, he said, he had some private business to transact.

Just before the train arrived at Crewe he suddenly became unwell, and was discovered by one of the luncheon-car attendants in a state of collapse in one of the first-class compartments.

He revived sufficiently to travel on to Manchester, where two porters had helped him into a cab and accompanied him to the hotel. On being taken to his room, he again lapsed into unconsciousness. A doctor was called, but he could not diagnose the ailment, except that the patient's heart was seriously affected, and, that being so, a fatal termination of the seizure might ensue.

Toward two o'clock next morning, Blair, who had neither given his name nor told the hotel people who he was, asked that both Seton and myself should be telegraphed for, and the result was that in anxious surprise we both rushed to Manchester, where on arrival we discovered our friend to be in an utterly hopeless condition.

On entering the room we found the doctor, a young and rather pleasant man named Glenn, in attendance. Blair was conscious, and listened to the medical opinion without flinching. Indeed, he seemed rather to welcome death than to dread it, for when he heard that he was in such a very critical condition, a faint smile crossed his pale, drawn features, and he remarked:

"Every man must die, so it may as well be to-day as to-morrow." Then, turning to me, he added: "Gilbert, you are very good to come just to say good-by." And he put out his thin, cold hand and grasped mine, while his eyes were fastened upon me with that strange, intent look that only comes into a man's gaze when he is on the brink of the grave.

"It is a friend's duty, Burton," I

answered, deeply in earnest. "But you must still hope. Doctors are often mistaken. Why, you've a splendid constitution, haven't you?"

"Hardly ever had a day's illness since I was a kid," was the millionaire's reply, in a low, weak voice. "But this fit has bowled me completely over."

We endeavored to ascertain exactly how he was seized, but neither Reggie nor the doctor could gather anything tangible.

"I became faint all of a sudden, and I know nothing more," was all the dying man would reply. "But," he added, turning again to me, "don't tell Mab till it's all over. Poor girl! My only regret is in leaving her. You two fellows were so very good to her back in the old days, you won't abandon her now, will you?" he implored, speaking slowly and with very great difficulty, tears standing in his eyes.

"Certainly not, old chap," was my answer. "If left alone, she'll want some one to advise her, and to look after her interests."

"The legal gentry will do that," he snapped, with a strange hardness in his voice, as though he entertained no love for his lawyers. "No, I want you to see that no man marries her for her money—you understand? Dozens of fellows are after her at this moment, I know, but I'd rather see her dead than that she should marry one of them. She must marry for love—love, you hear? Promise me, Gilbert, that you'll look after her, won't you?"

Still holding his hand, I promised.

That was the last word he uttered. His pale lips twitched again, but no sound came from them. His glassy eyes were fixed upon me with a stony, terrible stare, as though he were endeavoring to tell me something.

Perhaps he was revealing to me the great secret—the secret of how he had solved the mystery of fortune and become worth over a million pounds sterling—perhaps he was speaking of Mab. His tongue refused to articulate; the silence of death was upon him.

Thus he passed away; and thus did I find myself bound to a promise which I intended to fulfil, even though he had not revealed to us his secret, as we confidently expected. We believed that, knowing himself to be dying, he had summoned us there to impart that knowledge which would render us both rich beyond the dreams of avarice. But in this we had been most bitterly disappointed.

For five years, I confess, we had waited, expecting that he would some day share some of his wealth with us in return for those services we had rendered him in the past. Yet now it seemed he had coolly disregarded his indebtedness to us, and at the same time had imposed upon me a duty by no means easy—the guardianship of his only daughter, Mabel.

CHAPTER II.

CONCERNS CERTAIN MYSTERIOUS FACTS.

I ought here to declare that, having regard to all the curious and mysterious circumstances of the past, the situation was, to me, far from satisfactory.

As we strolled together along Market Street that cold night discussing the affair, Reggie suggested that the secret might be written somewhere and sealed up among the dead man's effects. But in that case, unless it were addressed to us, it would be opened by the persons the dying man had caustically referred to as "the legal gentry," and in all probability be turned by them to profitable account.

His lawyers were, we knew, Leighton, Brown & Leighton, an eminently respectable firm in Bedford Row; therefore we sent a telegram from the Central Office informing them of their client's sudden death, and requesting that a member of the firm should at once come to Manchester to attend the inquest which Doctor Glenn had declared would be necessary.

As the deceased man had expressed a wish that Mabel should, for the present, remain in ignorance, we did not inform her of the tragic occurrence.

Curiosity prompted us to ascend

again to the dead man's chamber and examine the contents of his kit-bag and suit-case, but, beyond his clothes, a check-book, and about ten pounds in gold, we found nothing.

I think that we both half-expected to discover the key to that remarkable secret which he had somehow obtained, yet it was hardly to be imagined that he would carry such a valuable asset about with him in his luggage.

In the pocket of a small writing-book, which formed part of the fittings of the suit-case, I discovered several letters, all of which I examined and found to be of no importance—save one, a dirty, ill-written note in Italian, containing some passages which struck me as curious.

Indeed, so strange was the tenor of the whole communication, that, with Reggie's connivance, I resolved to take possession of it and make further inquiry.

There were many things about Burton Blair that had puzzled us for years, therefore we were both determined, if possible, to elucidate the curious mystery that had surrounded him, even if he had carried to his grave the secret of his enormous fortune.

We alone in all the world knew the existence of the secret, only we were in ignorance of the necessary key by which the source of riches could be opened.

The manner in which he had gained his great wealth was a mystery to every one, even to his daughter Mabel.

In the city and in society he was vaguely believed by some to possess large interests in mines, and to be a successful speculator in stocks, while others declared that he owned large sections of real estate in America; others were positive that certain concessions from the Ottoman government had brought him his gold.

All were, however, mistaken in their surmises. Burton Blair possessed not an acre of land; he had not a penny in any public company; he was not interested in either government concessions or industrial enterprises.

The source of the great wealth by which he had, in five years, been able to purchase, decorate, and furnish in princely manner one of the finest houses in Grosvenor Square, keep three of the most expensive motor-cars, and rent that fine old mansion, Mayvill Court, in Herefordshire, came from a source which nobody knew or even suspected. His were mysterious millions.

"I wonder if anything will come out at the inquest?" queried Reggie, later that evening. "His lawyers undoubtedly know nothing."

"He may have left some paper which reveals the truth," I answered. "Men who are silent in life often commit their secrets to paper."

"I don't think Burton ever did."

"He may have done so for Mabel's benefit, remember."

"That's true," said my friend. "I never thought of that. If he wished to provide for her, he would leave his secret with some one whom he could implicitly trust. Yet he trusted us—up to a certain point. We are the only ones who have any real knowledge of the state of affairs."

And my tall, long-legged, fair-haired friend, who stood six feet in his stockings, the picture of the easy-going, muscular Englishman, although engaged in the commerce of feminine frippery, stopped with a low grunt of dissatisfaction, and carefully lit a fresh cigar.

We passed a dismal evening strolling about the streets of Manchester, feeling that in Burton Blair we had lost a friend. But when on the following morning we met Herbert Leighton, the lawyer, in the hall of the Queen's, and had a long consultation with him, the mystery surrounding the dead man became considerably heightened.

"You both knew my late client very well indeed," the lawyer remarked, after some preliminaries. "Now, are you aware of the existence of any one who would profit by his sudden decease?"

"That's a curious question," I remarked. "Why?"

"Well, the fact is this," explained the dark, sharp-featured man, with some hesitation, "I have every reason

to believe that he has been the victim of foul play."

"Foul play!" I gasped. "You surely don't think that he was murdered? Why, my dear fellow, that couldn't be. He was taken sick in the train, and died in bed in our presence."

The lawyer, whose face had now become graver, merely shrugged his narrow shoulders, and said:

"We must, of course, await the result of the inquest, but from information in my possession I feel confident that Burton Blair did not die a natural death."

That same evening the coroner held his inquiry in a private room in the hotel, and, according to the two doctors who had made the post-mortem examination earlier in the day, death was due entirely to natural causes. It was discovered that Blair had naturally a weak heart, and that the fatal termination had been accelerated by the oscillation of the train.

There was absolutely nothing whatever to induce any suspicion of foul play, therefore the jury returned a verdict in accordance with the medical evidence that death was due to natural causes, and an order was given for the removal of the body to London for burial.

An hour after the inquest I took Mr. Leighton aside and said:

"As you know, I have for some years been one of the late Mr. Blair's most intimate friends, and, therefore, I am naturally very much interested to know what induced you to suspect foul play."

"My suspicions were well based," was his rather enigmatical answer.

"Upon what?"

"Upon the fact that my client himself had been threatened, and that, although he told no one, and laughed at my suggested precautions, he has lived in daily dread of assassination."

"Curious," I said. "Very curious."

I told him nothing of that remarkable letter I had secured from the dead man's luggage. If what he said were really true, then there was a very extraordinary secret in the death of Burton Blair, as there was in his strange, romantic, and mysterious life—a secret that was inscrutable, yet absolutely unique.

It will be necessary, I think, to fully explain the curious circumstances which first brought us into contact with Burton Blair, and to describe the mysterious events which followed our acquaintanceship. From beginning to end the whole affair is so remarkable that many who read this record of facts may be inclined to doubt my veracity. To such, I would at the very outset suggest that they make inquiries in London, in that little world of adventurers, speculators, money-lenders, and money-losers known as "the City," where many can be found to corroborate my statements.

CHAPTER III.

IN WHICH A STRANGE STORY IS TOLD.

In order to put the plain, unvarnished truth before you, I must, in the first place, explain that, at the time of my introduction to Burton Blair, I, Gilbert Greenwood, was a man of small means, having been left an annuity by an ascetic, but somewhat prosperous, aunt.

Reginald Seton I had known ever since we had been lads together at Charterhouse. The son of George Seton, a lace warehouseman of Cannon Street and alderman of the City of London, Reggie had been left at twenty-five with a heavy burden of debt and an old-fashioned, high-class, but rapidly declining business.

Still, brought up to the lace trade in a factory at Nottingham, Reggie boldly followed in his father's footsteps, and by dint of close attention to business succeeded in rubbing along sufficiently well to avoid the bankruptcy court, and to secure an income of a few hundreds a year.

Both of us were yet bachelors, and we chummed in comfortable chambers in a newly constructed block of flats in Great Russell Street. Being fond of fox-hunting, we also rented a cheap, old-fashioned house in a rural village

called Helpstone, eighty miles from London, in the Fitzwilliam country. Here we spent each winter, usually being "out" two days a week.

Neither of us was well off, and we had, as may be imagined, to practise a good deal of economy, for fox-hunting is an expensive sport to the poor man. Nevertheless, we were both fortunate in possessing a couple of good horses apiece, and by dint of a little squeezing here and there, were able to indulge in those exhilarating runs across country which cause the blood to tingle with excitement.

Reggie was sometimes kept in town by his deals in torchon, Maltese, and Honiton, therefore I frequently lived alone in the old-fashioned, ivy-covered house, with Glave, my general factotum, and old Mrs. Axford, our cook, to look after me.

One bitterly cold evening in January Reggie was absent in London, and I was riding home from a hunt utterly worn out.

The meet that morning had been at Kate's Cabin, over in Huntingdonshire, and after two good runs I had found myself beyond Stilton, eighteen miles from home. Still, the scent had been excellent, and we had had good sport, therefore I took a pull at my flask and rode forward across country in the gathering gloom.

Fortunately I found the river fordable at Water Newton mill, a fact which saved me the long détour by Wansford, and then when within a mile of home I allowed my horse to walk, as I always did, in order that he might cool down before going to his stable.

The dusk of the short afternoon was just deepening into night, and the biting wind cut me like a knife as I passed the crossroads about half a mile from Helpstone village, jogging along steadily, when of a sudden a man's burly figure loomed out of the shadow of the high, holly hedge, and a deep voice exclaimed:

"Pardon me, sir, but I'm a stranger in these parts, and my daughter here has fainted. Is there a house near?"

Then, as I drew near, I saw huddled upon a heap of stones at the roadside the slim, fragile form of a young girl of about sixteen, wrapped in a thick, dark-colored cloak.

In the glimmer of light that remained, I saw that the man who was addressing me was a bluff, rather well-spoken, dark-bearded fellow of about forty-five or so, in a frayed suit of blue serge and peaked cap, that gave him something of the appearance of a seafarer.

His face was seamed and weather-beaten, and his broad, powerful jaws betokened a strength of character and dogged determination.

"Has your daughter been taken ill?" I inquired, when I had thoroughly examined him.

"Well, the fact is, we've walked a long way to-day, and I think she's tired out. She became dazed like about half an hour ago, and when she sat down she fell insensible."

"She mustn't stay here," I said quickly. "She'll be frozen to death. My house is over yonder. I'll ride on and bring back some one to help carry her."

The man commenced to thank me, but I touched my horse with the spur, and was soon in the stable-yard calling for Glave to accompany me back to the spot where I had left the wayfarers.

A quarter of an hour later we had arranged the insensible girl on a couch in my warm, snug sitting-room; had forced some brandy down her throat, and she had opened her eyes wonderingly, and looked round with childlike timidity upon her unfamiliar surroundings.

Her gaze met mine, and I saw that her countenance was undeniably beautiful, of that dark, half-tragic type, her eyes rendered the more luminous by the deathlike pallor of her countenance.

The features were well-molded, refined, and handsome in every line, and as she addressed her father, inquiring what had occurred, I detected that she was no mere waif of the highway, but, on the contrary, highly intelligent, well-mannered, and well-educated.

Her father, in a few deep words, explained our abrupt meeting and my

hospitality, whereupon she smiled upon me sweetly and uttered words of thanks.

"It must have been the intense cold, I think," she added. "Somehow I felt benumbed all at once, and my head swam so that I couldn't stand. But it is really very kind indeed of you. I'm so sorry that we've disturbed you like this."

I assured her that my only wish was for her complete recovery, and as I spoke I could not conceal from myself that her beauty was very remarkable. Although young, and her figure as yet not fully developed, her face was nevertheless one of the most nearly perfect I had ever seen.

Glave, in no good mood at the introduction of tramps, entered, announcing that my dinner was ready; but the girl declined my invitation to eat, saying that if I would permit her she would rather remain alone on the couch before the fire for half an hour longer.

I sent her some hot soup by old Mrs. Axford, while her father, having washed his hands, accompanied me to the dining-room.

He seemed half-famished, taciturn, and reserved at first, but presently, when he had judged my character sufficiently, he explained that his name was Burton Blair, that in his absence abroad he had lost his wife ten years before, and that little Mab was his only child. As his appearance denoted, he had been at sea the greater part of his life and held a master's certificate, but of late he had been living ashore.

"I've been home these three years now," he went on, "and I've had a pretty rough time of it, I can tell you. Poor Mab! I wouldn't have minded had it not been for her. She's a brick, she is, just as her mother was. She's had three years of semi-starvation, and yet she's never once complained. She knows my character by now; she knows that when once Burton Blair makes up his mind to do a thing, by gad! be does it." And he set those square jaws of his hard, while a look of determination and dogged persistency came into his eyes, the fiercest I had ever seen.

"But, Mr. Blair, why did you leave the sea to starve ashore?" I inquired, my curiosity aroused.

"Because—well, because I had a reason—a strong reason," was his hesitating reply. "You see me homeless and hungry to-night, but to-morrow I may be a millionaire!"

His face assumed a mysterious, sphinxlike expression which puzzled me.

Many and many a time since then have I recalled those strange, prophetic words of his as he sat at my table, shabby, unkempt, and ravenously hungry, a worn-out, half-frozen tramp from the highroad, who, absurd as it then seemed, held the strong belief that ere long he would be the possessor of millions.

I remember well how I smiled at his vague assertion. Every man who falls low in the social scale clings to the will-o'-the-wisp belief that his luck will change, and that by some vagary of fortune he will come up again smiling. Hope is never dead within the ruined man.

By dint of some careful questions I tried to obtain further information regarding this confident hope of wealth which he entertained, but he would tell me nothing—absolutely nothing.

He dined well, took brandy with his coffee, accepted a cigar, and smoked with the air of a contented man, who had no single thought or care in the whole world—a man who knew exactly what the future held for him.

Thus, from the very first, Burton Blair was a mystery. On rejoining Mabel, we found her sleeping peacefully, utterly worn out. Therefore I induced him to remain beneath my roof that night, in order that she might rest, and, returning to the dining-room, her father and I sat together smoking and talking for several hours.

He told me of his hard, rough years at sea, of strange adventures in savage lands, of a narrow escape from death at the hands of a band of natives in the Cameroons, and of how, for three years, he acted as captain of a river-steamer up the Congo, one of the pioneers of civilization.

He related his thrilling adventures calmly and naturally, without any bragging, but just in a plain, matter-of-fact manner.

"And now I'm tramping the turnpikes of England," he added, laughing. "You must, no doubt, think it very strange, Mr. Greenwood, but, to tell you the truth, I am actively prosecuting a rather curious quest, the successful issue of which will one day bring me wealth beyond my wildest dreams."

With a strange, wild look in his great dark eyes, he swiftly undid his blue guernsey, and, delving beneath it, drew forth a square, flat piece of soiled and well-worn chamois leather, in which there seemed to be sewed some precious document or other.

"Look!" he cried. "My secret lies here. Some day I shall discover the key to it—maybe to-morrow, or next day, or next year. When, is quite immaterial. The result will be the same. My years of continuous search and travel will be rewarded—and I shall be rich, and the world will wonder!"

And, laughing contentedly, almost triumphantly within himself, he carefully replaced his precious document, and, rising, stood with his back to the fire in the attitude of a man entirely confident of what was written in the Book of Fate.

That midnight scene, in all its strange, romantic detail; that occasion when the tired wayfarer and his daughter spent their first night as my guests, rose before me, when, on that bright, cold afternoon following the inquest up at Manchester, I alighted from a cab in front of the big white house in Grosvenor Square, and was told by Carter, the solemn man-servant, that Miss Mabel was at home.

That magnificent mansion, with its exquisite decorations, its genuine Louis XIV. furniture, its valuable pictures and splendid examples of seventeenth-century statuary, was sufficient testimony that the shabby wayfarer who had uttered those words in my narrow little dining-room five years before had made no idle boast.

The secret sewed within that dirty bag of wash-leather, whatever it may have been, had already realized over a million pounds sterling, and was still realizing enormous sums, until death had now so suddenly intervened. The mystery of it all was beyond solution; the enigma was complete.

Reflections such as these swept through my mind as I followed the footman up the wide, marble staircase, and was shown ceremoniously into the great gold-and-white drawing-room, the walls of which were paneled with pale-rose silk, the four large windows affording a wide view across the square.

Those priceless paintings, those beautiful cabinets and unique bric-à-brac—all were purchased with the proceeds from that mysterious secret, the secret which had in that short space of five years been the means of transforming a homeless, down-at-heel wanderer into a millionaire.

Gazing aimlessly across the gray square with its leafless trees, I stood undecided how best to break the sad news, when a slight frou-frou of silk swept behind me; and, turning quickly, I confronted the dead man's daughter, looking now, at twenty-three, far more sweet, graceful, and womanly than in that first hour of our strange meeting by the wayside long ago.

But her dead-black gown, her trembling form, and her pale, tear-stained cheeks, told me in an instant that this woman in my charge had already learned the painful truth. She halted before me, a beautiful, tragic figure, her tiny white hand nervously clutching the back of one of the gilt chairs for support.

"I know!" she exclaimed, in a broken voice, quite unnatural to her, her eyes fixed upon me—"I know, Mr. Greenwood, why you have called. The truth has been told to me by Mr. Leighton an hour ago. Ah! my poor father!" she sighed, the words catching in her throat. "Why did he go to Manchester? His enemies have triumphed, just as I have all along feared they would. But he believed ill of no man. He refused always to heed my warnings, and laughed at all my fears. Yet,

alas! the ghastly truth is now only too plain. My poor father!" she moaned, her handsome face blanched to the lips. "He is dead—and his secret is out!"

CHAPTER IV.

WHICH TRAVERSES DANGEROUS GROUND.

"Are you really suspicious, Mabel, that your father has been the victim of foul play?" I inquired quickly of the dead man's daughter, standing pale and unnerved before me.

"I am," was her direct, unhesitating answer. "You know his story, Mr. Greenwood; you know how he carried with him something he had sewed in a piece of chamois leather; something which was his most precious possession. Mr. Leighton tells me that it is missing."

"That is unfortunately so," I said. "We all three searched for it among his clothes and in his luggage; we made inquiry of the luncheon-car attendant who found him insensible in the railway-carriage, of the porters who conveyed him to the hotel, of every one, in fact, but can find no trace of it whatsoever."

"Because it has been deliberately stolen," she declared.

"Then your theory is that he has been assassinated in order to conceal the theft?"

She nodded in the affirmative, her face still hard and pale.

"But there is no evidence whatever of foul play, recollect," I demurred. "Both medical men, two of the best in Manchester, declared that death was entirely due to natural causes."

"I care nothing for what they say. The little sachet which my father sewed with his own hands, and guarded so carefully all these years, and which for some curious reason he would neither trust in any bank nor in a safe-deposit vault, is missing. His enemies have gained possession of it, just as I knew they would."

"I recollect him showing me that little bag of wash-leather on the first night of our acquaintance," I said. "He then declared that what was contained therein would bring him wealth—and it certainly has done," I added, glancing around that magnificent apartment.

"It brought him wealth, but not happiness, Mr. Greenwood," she amended quietly. "That packet, the contents of which I have never seen, he has carried with him in his pocket or suspended round his neck ever since it first came into his possession years ago. In all his clothes he had a special pocket in which to carry it, while at night he wore it in a specially made belt, which was locked around his waist. I think he regarded it as a sort of charm, or talisman, which, besides bringing him his great fortune, also preserved him from all ills. The reason of this I cannot tell."

"Did you never ascertain the nature of the document which he considered so precious?"

"I tried to do so many times, but he would never reveal it to me. It was his secret, he would say, and no more."

Both Reggie and I, times without number, had endeavored to learn what the mysterious packet really contained, but had been no more successful than the charming girl now standing before me.

Burton Blair was a strange man, both in actions and in words; very reserved regarding his own affairs, and yet, curiously enough, with the advent of prosperity he had become a prince of good fellows.

"But who were his enemies?" I inquired.

"Ah! of that I am likewise in utter ignorance," was her reply. "As you know, during the past year or two, like all rich men, he has been surrounded by adventurers and parasites of all sorts, whom Ford, his secretary, has had trouble in keeping at arm's-length. It may be that the existence of the precious packet was known, and that my father fell a victim to some foul plot. At least, that is my firm idea."

"If so, the police should certainly be informed," I suggested. "It is true that the wash-leather sachet which he showed me on the night of our first meeting is now missing, for we have

all made the most careful search for it, but in vain. Yet what could its possession possibly profit any one if the key to what was contained there is wanting?"

"But was not this key, whatever it was, also in my father's hands?" queried Mabel Blair. "Was it not the discovery of that very key which gave us all these possessions?" she insisted, with the sweet womanliness that was her most engaging characteristic.

"Exactly. But surely your father, shrewd and cautious as he always was, would never carry upon his person both problem and key together! I can't really believe that he'd do such a foolish thing as that."

"Nor do I. Although I was his only child, and his confidante in everything relating to his life, there was one thing he persistently kept from me, and that was the nature of his secret. Sometimes I have found myself suspecting that it was not an altogether creditable one—indeed, one that a father dare not reveal to his daughter. And yet no one has ever accused him of dishonesty or of double-dealing. At other times I have noticed in his face and manner an air of distinct mystery, which has caused me to believe that the source of our unlimited wealth was some curious and romantic one, which to the world would be regarded as entirely incredible.

"One night," she went on musingly, "as we sat here at table after dinner, he had been telling me about my mother who died in lodgings in a back street in Manchester while he was absent on a voyage to the west coast of Africa. He declared that if London knew the source of his income it would be astounded. 'But,' he added, 'it is a secret—a secret I intend to carry with me to the grave.' "

Strangely enough, Burton Blair had uttered those very same words to me a couple of years before, when one night he had sat before the fire in my rooms in Great Russell Street, and I had referred to his marvelous stroke of good fortune. He had died, and had either carried out his threat of destroying that evidence of his secret in the shape of the well-worn chamois leather bag, or else it had been ingeniously stolen from him.

The curious, ill-written letter I had secured from my friend's luggage, while puzzling me, had aroused certain suspicions that hitherto I had not entertained.

I, of course, told Mabel nothing of my suspicions, for I did not wish to cause her any greater pain. In the years we had been acquainted we had always been good friends. Although Reggie was fifteen years her senior, and I thirteen years, I believe she regarded both of us as big brothers.

Our friendship had commenced when, finding Burton Blair, the seafaring tramp, practically starving as he was, we clubbed together from our small means and sent his daughter to a school at Bournemouth.

To allow so young and delicate a girl to tramp England aimlessly in search of some vague and secret information—which seemed to be her erratic father's object—was, we decided, an utter impossibility; therefore, following that night of our first meeting at Helpstone, Burton and his daughter remained our guests for a week, and, after many consultations and some little economies, we were at last successful in placing Mabel at the Bournemouth school, a service for which we later received her heartfelt thanks.

Poverty had already set its stamp upon the girl's sweet face, and her beauty was beginning to fade when we so fortunately discovered her, and rescued her from the necessity of tramping footsore over those endless, pitiless highways.

Contrary to our expectation, it was quite a long time before we could induce Blair to allow his daughter to go to the Bournemouth school, for, as a matter of fact, both father and daughter were entirely devoted to one another.

Nevertheless, in the end we triumphed, and, later, when the bluff, bearded wayfarer came to his own, he did not forget to return thanks to us in a very substantial manner.

Indeed, our present improved circum-

stances were due to him, for not only had he handed a check to Reggie sufficient to pay the whole of the liabilities of the Cannon Street lace business, but to me, on my birthday three years ago, he had sent, enclosed in a cheap, silver cigarette-case, a draft upon his bankers for a sum sufficient to provide me with a very comfortable little annuity.

Burton Blair never forgot his friends —neither did he ever forgive an unkind action. Mabel was his idol, his only real confidante, and yet it seemed more than strange that she knew absolutely nothing of the mysterious source of his colossal income.

Together we sat for over an hour in that great drawing-room, the very splendor of which spoke mystery.

Mrs. Percival, the pleasant, middle-aged widow of a naval surgeon, who was Mabel's chaperon and companion, entered, but left us quickly, much upset by the tragic news.

Presently, when I told Mabel of my promise to her father, a slight blush suffused her pale cheeks.

"It is really very good of you to trouble over my affairs, Mr. Greenwood," she said. "I suppose in future I shall have to consider you as my guardian." And she laughed lightly, twisting her ring around her finger.

"Not as your legal guardian," I answered. "Your father's lawyers will, no doubt, act in that capacity. Rather, think of me as your protector and your friend."

"Ah!" she replied sadly, "I suppose I shall require both, now that poor dad is dead."

"I have been your friend for over five years, Mabel, and I hope you will still allow me to carry out my promise to your father," I said, standing before her and speaking in deep earnestness. "There must, however, at the outset be a clear and distinct understanding between us. Therefore permit me for one moment to speak to you candidly, as a man should to a woman who is his friend. You, Mabel, are young, and—well, you are very good-looking——"

"No; really, Mr. Greenwood," she cried, interrupting me and blushing at my compliment, "it is too bad of you. I'm sure——"

"Hear me out, please," I continued, with mock severity. "You are young, you are very good-looking, and you are rich; you therefore possess the three necessary attributes which render a woman eligible in these modern days when sentiment is held of such little account. Well, people who will watch our intimate friendship will, with ill nature, declare, no doubt, that I am seeking to marry you for your money. I am quite sure the world will say this, but what I want you to promise is to at once refute such a statement."

She nodded her head vigorously, and I went on: "I desire that you and I shall be firm friends, just as we have ever been, without any thought of affection. I may admire you—I confess, now, that I have always admired you —but with a man of my limited means love for you is entirely out of the question. Understand, that I do not wish to presume upon the past, now that your father is dead and you are alone. Understand, too, from the very outset, that I now give you the hand of firm friendship as I would give it to Reggie, my old schoolfellow and best friend, and that in future I shall safeguard your interests as though they were my own." And I held out my hand to her.

For a moment she hesitated, for my words had apparently caused her the most profound surprise.

"Very well," she faltered, glancing for an instant up to my face. "It is a bargain—if you wish it to be so."

"I wish, Mabel, to carry out the promise I made to your father," I said. "As you know, I am greatly indebted to him for much generosity, and I wish, therefore, as a mark of gratitude, to stand in his place and protect his daughter—yourself."

"But were we not, in the first place, both indebted to you?" she objected. "If it had not been for Mr. Seton and yourself I might have wandered on until I died by the wayside."

"For what was your father searching?" I asked. "He surely told you?"

"No, he never did. I am in entire ignorance of the reason of his three years of tramping up and down England. He had a distinct object, which he accomplished, but what it actually was he would never reveal to me."

"It was, I suppose, in connection with that document he always carried?"

"I believe it was," was her response. Then she added, returning to her previous observations: "Why speak of your indebtedness to him, Mr. Greenwood, when I know full well how you sold your best horse in order to pay my school fees at Bournemouth, and that you could not hunt that season in consequence? You denied yourself the only little pleasure you had in order that I might be well cared for."

"I forbid you to mention that again," I said quickly. "Recollect, we are now friends, and between friends there can be no question of indebtedness."

"Then you must not talk of any little service my father rendered to you," she laughed. "Come, now, I shall be unruly if you don't keep to your part of the bargain!"

And so we were compelled at that juncture to cry quits, and we recommenced our friendship on a firm and perfectly well-defined basis.

Yet how strange it was! The beauty of Mabel Blair, as she lounged there before me in that magnificent home that was now hers, was surely sufficient to turn the head of any man who was not a chancery judge or a Catholic cardinal—different, indeed, from the poor, half-starved girl whom I had first encountered by the roadside in the winter gloom.

CHAPTER V.

IN WHICH THE MYSTERY BECOMES CONSIDERABLY INCREASED.

That the precious document, or whatever it was, sewn up in the wash-leather which the dead man had so carefully guarded through all those years, was now missing, was, in itself, a very suspicious circumstance, while Mabel's vague but distinct apprehensions, which she either would not or could not define, now aroused my suspicions that Burton Blair had been the victim of foul play.

Immediately after leaving her I drove to Bedford Row, and held another consultation with Leighton, to whom I explained my grave fears.

"As I have already explained, Mr. Greenwood," responded the lawyer, leaning back in his padded chair and regarding me gravely through his glasses, "I believe that my client did not die a natural death. There was some mystery in his life, some strange, romantic circumstance which, unfortunately, he never thought fit to confide to me. He held a secret, he told me, and by knowledge of that secret he obtained his vast wealth. Only half an hour ago I made a rough calculation of the present value of his estate, and at the lowest, I believe it will be found to amount to over two and a half millions. The whole of this, I may tell you in confidence, goes unreservedly to his daughter, with the exception of several legacies, which include ten thousand each to Mr. Seton and to yourself, two thousand to Mrs. Percival, and some small sums to the servants.

"But," he added, "there is a clause in the will which is very puzzling, and which closely affects yourself. As we both suspect foul play, I think I may as well at once show it to you without waiting for my unfortunate client's burial and the formal reading of his will."

Then he rose; and from a big black deed-box lettered "Burton Blair, Esquire," took out the dead man's will, and, opening it, showed me a passage which read:

(10) I give and bequeath to Gilbert Greenwood, of The Cedars, Helpstone, the small bag of chamois leather that will be found upon me at the time of my death, in order that he may profit by what is contained therein, and as recompense for certain valuable services rendered to me. Let him recollect always this rime:

"Henry the Eighth was a knave to his queens,
He'd one short of seven—and nine or ten scenes!"

and let him well and truly preserve the secret from every man, just as I have done.

That was all. A strange clause surely! Burton Blair had, after all, actually bequeathed his secret to me, the secret that had brought him his colossal wealth! Yet it was already lost—probably stolen by his enemies.

"That's a curious doggerel," the lawyer commented. "But poor Blair possessed but little literary culture, I fear. He knew more about the sea than poetry. Yet, after all, it seems a tantalizing situation that you should be left the secret of the source of my client's enormous fortune, and that it should be stolen from you in this manner."

"We had, I think, better consult the police, and explain our suspicions," I said, in bitter chagrin that the chamois sachet should have fallen into other hands.

"I entirely agree with you, Mr. Greenwood. We will go together to Scotland Yard and get them to institute inquiries. If Mr. Blair was actually murdered, then his assassination was accomplished in a most secret and remarkable manner, to say the least. But there is one further clause in the will which is somewhat disturbing, and that is with regard to his daughter Mabel. The testator has appointed some person of whom I have never heard—a man called Paolo Melandrini, an Italian, apparently living in Florence, to be her secretary and the manager of her affairs."

"What!" I cried, amazed. "An Italian to be her secretary! Who is he?"

"A person with whom I am not acquainted; whose name, indeed, has never been mentioned to me by my client. He merely dictated it to me when I drafted the will."

"But the thing's absurd!" I exclaimed. "Surely you can't let an unknown foreigner, who may be a scoundrel for all we know, have control of all her money?"

"I fear there's no help for it," replied Leighton gravely. "It is written here, and we shall be compelled to give notice to this man, whoever he is, of his appointment at a salary of five thousand pounds a year."

"And will he really have control of her affairs?"

"Absolutely. Indeed, the whole estate is left to her on condition that she accepts this fellow as her secretary and confidential adviser."

"Why, Blair must have been mad!" I fumed. "Has Mabel any knowledge of this mysterious Italian?"

"She never heard of him."

"Well, in that case, I think that, before he is informed of poor Blair's death and the good fortune in store for him, we ought at least to find out who and what he is. We can, in any case, keep a watchful eye on him, and see that he doesn't trick Mabel out of her money."

"He will have the entire management of everything"—the lawyer sighed, and wiped his glasses slowly—"therefore it will be difficult to know what goes on, or how much he puts into his own pocket."

"But whatever could possess Blair to insert such a mad clause as that? Didn't you point out the folly of it?"

"I did."

"And what did he say?"

"He reflected a few moments over my words, sighed, and then answered: 'It is imperative, Leighton. I have no alternative.' So I took it that he was acting under compulsion."

"You believe that this foreigner was in a position to demand it—eh?"

The lawyer nodded. He evidently was of opinion that the reason of the introduction of this unknown person into Mabel's household was a secret one, known only to Burton Blair and to the individual himself. It was curious, I reflected, that Mabel herself had not mentioned it to me. Yet perhaps she had hesitated, because I had told her of my promise to her father, and she did not wish to hurt my feelings. The whole situation became hourly more complicated and more mysterious.

I was, however, bent upon accomplishing two things—first, to recover the millionaire's most precious possession which he had bequeathed to me,

together with such an extraordinary injunction to recollect that doggerel couplet which still ran in my head; and, secondly, to make private inquiries regarding this unknown foreigner who had so suddenly been introduced into the affair.

That same evening at six o'clock, having met Reggie by appointment at Mr. Leighton's office, we all three drove to Scotland Yard, where we had a long consultation with one of the head officials, to whom we explained the circumstances and our suspicions of foul play.

"Well," he replied, at length, "of course I will institute inquiries in Manchester and elsewhere, but as the medical evidence has proved so conclusively that the gentleman in question died from natural causes, I cannot hold out very much hope that our department or the Manchester detective department can assist you. The grounds you have for supposing that he met with foul play are very vague, you must admit, and, as far as I can see, the only motive at all was the theft of this paper, or whatever it was, which he carried upon him. Yet men are not usually killed in broad daylight in order to commit a theft which any expert pickpocket might effect. Besides, if his enemies or rivals knew what it was, and how he was in the habit of carrying it, they could easily have secured it without assassination."

"But he was in possession of some secret," remarked the lawyer.

"Of what character?"

"Unfortunately, I have no idea. Nobody knows. All that we know is that its possession raised him from poverty to affluence, and that at least one person was eager to obtain possession of it."

"Naturally," remarked the gray-haired assistant-director of criminal investigations. "But who was this person?"

"I do not know. My client told me this a year ago, but mentioned no name."

"Then you have no suspicions whatever of any one?"

"None. The little bag of wash-leather, inside which the document was sewn, has been stolen, and this fact arouses our suspicion of foul play."

The hide-bound officer shook his head very dubiously.

"That is not enough upon which to base a suspicion of murder, especially as we have had all the evidence at the inquest, a post-mortem, and a unanimous verdict of the coroner's jury. No, gentlemen," he added, "I don't see any ground for really grave suspicion. The document may not have been stolen, after all. Mr. Blair seems to have been of a somewhat eccentric disposition, like many men who suddenly rise in the world; and he may have hidden it away for safe-keeping somewhere. To me, this seems by far the most likely theory, especially as he had expressed a fear that his enemies might gain possession of it."

"But surely, if there is suspicion of murder, it is the duty of the police to investigate it!" I exclaimed resentfully.

"Granted. But where is the suspicion? By doctors, coroner, local police, and jury, there was not the slightest doubt entertained that he died from natural causes," he argued. "In that case, the Manchester police have neither right nor necessity to interfere."

"But there has been a theft."

"What proof have you of it?" he asked, raising his gray eyebrows and tapping the table with his pen. "If you can show me that a theft has been committed, then I will put in motion the various influences at my command. On the contrary, you merely suspect that this something-sewn-in-a-bag has been stolen. Yet it may be hidden in some place difficult to find, but nevertheless in safety. As, however, you all three allege that the unfortunate gentleman was assassinated in order to gain possession of this mysterious little packet of which he was so careful, I will communicate with the Manchester city police, and ask them to make what inquiries they can. Further than that, gentlemen," he added suavely, "I fear that my department cannot assist you."

I stormed for a moment, but he was not to be moved.

"I'm only acting, sir, upon my in-

structions, conjointly with what you have yourself told me," he said. "I assure you that if I ordered inquiries to be made in every case in which persons are alleged to have been murdered, I should require a detective force as large as the British army. Why, not a day passes without my receiving dozens of secret callers and anonymous letters all alleging assassination. Eighteen years as head of this department, however, has, I think, taught me how to distinguish a case for inquiry—which yours is not."

Argument proved futile. The official mind was made up that Burton Blair had not fallen a victim to foul play, therefore we could hope for no assistance. So, with our dissatisfaction rather plainly marked, we rose and went out again into Whitehall.

"It's a crying shame!" Reggie declared angrily. "Poor Blair has been murdered—everything points to it—and yet the police won't lift a finger to assist us to reveal the truth, just because a doctor discovered that Blair had a weak heart. It's placing a premium on crime," he added, his fist clenched savagely. "I'll relate the whole thing to my friend Mills, the member of Parliament for West Derbyshire, and get him to ask a question in the House. We'll see what this new home secretary says to it! It'll be a nasty pill for him, I'll wager."

"Oh, he'll have some typewritten official excuse ready, never fear!" laughed Leighton. "If they won't help us, we must make inquiries for ourselves."

The lawyer parted from us at Trafalgar Square, arranging to meet us at Grosvenor Square after the funeral, when the will would be formally read before the dead man's daughter and her companion, Mrs. Percival.

"And then," he added, "we shall have to take some active steps to discover this mysterious person who is in future to control her fortune."

"I'll undertake the inquiries," I said. "Fortunately I speak Italian, therefore, before we give him notice of Blair's death, I'll go over to Florence and ascertain who and what he is."

Truth to tell, I had a suspicion that the letter which I had secured from the dead man's blotting-book, and which I had kept secretly to myself, had been written by this unknown individual—Paolo Melandrini.

Although it bore neither address nor signature, and was in a heavy and rather uneducated hand, it was evidently the letter of a Tuscan, for I detected in it certain phonetic spelling which was purely Florentine.

Translated, the strange communication read as follows:

> Your letter reached me only this morning. The Ceco [blind man] is in Paris, on his way to London. The girl is with him, and they evidently know something. So be very careful. He and his ingenious friends will probably try to trick you.
>
> I am still at my post, but the water has risen three meters on account of the heavy rains. Nevertheless, farming has been good, so I shall expect to meet you at vespers in San Frediano on the evening of the sixth of next month. I have something most important to tell you. Recollect that the Ceco means mischief, and act accordingly. Adieu.

Times without number I carefully translated the curious missive word for word. It was full of hidden meaning.

What seemed most probable was that the person known as the "blind man," who was Blair's enemy, had actually been successful in gaining possession of that precious little sachet of chamois leather that was now mine by right, together with the mysterious secret it contained.

TO BE CONTINUED.

His Nibs

By B. M. Bower

Author of "Rowdy of the 'Cross L,'" "Chip of the 'Flying U,'" Etc.

Between the cattleman and the sheepman of the West exists a deadly feud. In B. M. Bower's clever story the cattleman—represented by the "Happy Family" of the "Flying U" ranch—sets out to settle a little account with his inveterate enemy. "His Nibs," a tiny, but important personage, intervenes in unique fashion

ONE thousand broad-hipped beef-cattle, the pick of the Flying U herds, drank their fill of clear, cool water straight from mountain springs; drew their front feet leisurely, with many a sloshing *pluch,* out of the mud along the bank, and, turning lumberingly among their fellows who still thirsted, ambled slowly up the brown, grassy slope, grazing contentedly.

Farther up the creek, nestled among box-elders and enveloped in a tantalizing mixture of supper odors, the Flying U tents showed yellow-white against the bright hues of autumn leaves and the brown hillside beyond.

Up on the level, near the point of the lazily moving herd, Chip Bennett turned, with lowering brows, to Weary, who rode beside.

"Old Berger must have his gall," he said. "If that isn't a sheep camp on the hill just back of our line camp, my eyes are on the bum. What do you think?"

Weary swung round in the saddle and looked attentively. The low-hanging sun was turning the distant slopes and hilltops to shining gold, bringing into sharp relief objects that until then had been hidden or unnoticeable. Far to the east, with many miles of hill and coulée between, a tiny white patch no larger than Weary's hat-crown gleamed, dazzlingly distinct, upon the tawny slope. Away to the left, a square, gray shadow, which, if it had stood still, might easily have passed for a patch of sage, drifted slowly toward the white flake—sheep, beyond a doubt, feeding leisurely up to the herder's camp for the night.

"I guess that's right," was Weary's verdict. "That nose uh yellow rock marks the spring. They're within a hundred yards uh the cabin—only it's down out uh sight over the ridge. Lovely place for sheep. Lots uh grass and water——"

"That they've no business with. Berger's sure the limit, to camp his herder down right by our cabin. Say! the relief'll be out pretty quick; I'll stand till then, and you can ride over to Berger's and politely inform him—well, I'll write a note. By the time you get a fresh horse I'll have it ready. Darn his old carcass! I suppose he thought we wouldn't catch him at it; he knows blamed well we own that land."

"I guess that don't hurt the feed none, in his estimation," commented Weary, and rode off to camp.

Chip searched his pockets for pencil and paper, tore a leaf out of his account-book for want of something better, hung the reins over his arm, and scribbled the following, in firm, upright letters that spoke decision in every line:

MR. JACOB BERGER: A band of your sheep is camped on our land, by One Man Spring. To save unpleasant results, kindly move them at once. At once means before morning. C. BENNETT, Foreman U.

He looked again resentfully at the distant patch of gray. That they were Berger's sheep he had no doubt; no other sheepman ranged in that particular stretch of country, or disregarded with such Teutonic stubbornness the rights of others. And between the sheep and cattlemen exists, as every one knows, a feud as inherent and strong as the feud between the white race and the black. Also, the cattleman's hatred is keenest, for he suffers most. The sheep despoil his range and pollute his watering-places so that his cattle must leave that spot or starve.

A band of sheep grazing upon a certain tract will leave it a barren waste, stripped clean of grass as a prairie-dog town. To see them impudently located upon the best of the Flying U winter range was enough to roughen the temper of the mildest of men—which Chip, of a truth, was not.

Weary, clattering up behind him on Glory, the fastest little sorrel—and the wickedest—that ever fed with the Flying U cavvy, brought Chip back to nearer objects.

"You want to drag it, Weary, and let me know what the old fool is going to do about it. If he gets nifty, tell him those sheep'll be out of there by sunrise, or there'll be things doing."

Weary looked away at the distant white speck, and settled his hat more firmly upon his head.

"I'll bring yuh a favorable answer or a lock of his golden hair," he promised generously, and swung back his spurred heels. . .

Presently he resembled, more than anything, a brown ball rolling swiftly away to the sky-line, and Chip looked after him contentedly, sure that his errand would be well and speedily performed. One could always count upon Weary.

Just when the shadows grew long and thin and altogether grotesque in the coulée, Weary came galloping up to the Flying U tents, and Chip, seeing the light smoldering in his eyes and the indefinable, stern set of his chin, threw back his shoulders instinctively.

"Well?"

"'Eef you don'd like dose sheeps by dat spreeng and dose cabin off yours, you can move dose cabin und dose spreeng already. Dose sheeps sthop vere she iss, py damn!'" repeated Weary smoothly. "I didn't bring a lock uh hair, though, Chip; there wasn't enough to bother with."

The Happy Family crowded close. "What else did the old heathen say?" they demanded aggressively.

"Mama! it would bu'st a phonograph to repeat any more. Don't ask me to." Weary made for the cook-tent and his belated supper.

"Let's ride over there and labor with him, Chip," suggested Jack Bates eagerly.

"I roped a sheep-tent and snaked it four miles once, up on Milk River," Pink remarked, in his soft voice. "It sure put a three-ring circus away back in the dim distance. There was a whole bunch of us, and every fellow found something t' tie onto. The Silent One brought up the rear with the herder's stove. It was sure great, them private theatricals we had that day."

He dimpled wickedly, and turned his long-lashed, innocent eyes upon Chip.

"If yuh want to stage that drama," he added sweetly, "I'm willing t' release the patent. I hate to be called small-minded."

Chip looked at Pink, then at the others, and grinned. "We could do that easier than move the spring," he said dryly.

"Won't somebody stand guard for me?" pleaded Jack Bates. "I've got to be in on this house-cleaning job."

Chip lighted a cigarette, the while Jack watched his thin face anxiously. To know that the Happy Family was off dealing misery to a sheep-herder, and to be left behind riding round and round a beef-herd—Jack closed his mind against such misfortune.

"I guess Kansas can stand first guard," said Chip finally. "You can take his place on last, if you'd rather."

"Good boy, Splinter!" Jack thumped Chip's shoulder gratefully.

"Well, the way we'll move dose

sheeps and dose camp won't be slow!" declared Cal Emmett enthusiastically.

"By golly! yuh got t' count me in, too," cried Slim, waking up to the situation.

"You're due for middle guard; but we ought to be back by then, if we get a move on. I suppose we'll have to take the whole family, or have a riot." Chip started for the corral with his rope, and Cal and Pink, who had no night horses saddled, followed hurriedly after.

Presently the seven galloped up out of the creek-bottom, and headed straight toward a moon as large as a wagon-wheel, that was resting its lower rim on the top of a far-off, purple mountain. There would be plenty of light—which would facilitate matters much.

"Where'll we move 'em to?" Jack Bates asked, when they had reached the level.

"Into old Berger's front dooryard, darn him!" Chip told them savagely. "Next time he's told to move his sheep he'll likely get busy without being asked a second time."

"By golly! he ought t' be kicked clear out uh the country," Slim exploded. "We ought t' put him and his sheep so fur even the assessor couldn't find 'em."

"I bet two bits my rope drops over the tent-pole first," challenged irrepressible Pink.

"I raise your ante, Cadwolloper; I bet a dollar mine goes first," retorted Weary.

"I bet yuh the herder cuts down on us with a gun," predicted Happy Jack with his customary pessimism. "I knowed a bunch uh fellows that started t' drive a band uh sheep out of a water-gap oncet—and the coroner had t' come and set on two of 'em. Sheep-herders is all batty; yuh can't never tell——"

"I knew a misguided human once," Pink cut in musically, "that went around prognosticating trouble for all his friends, and hoodooing every play that come along. The coroner never set on him, though."

"Why not? Justice must 'a' fell short, then—he sure deserved t' die," said Cal sternly, eying Happy Jack.

"Well, I won't go into unpleasant details. But when his loving friends got through with him, there wasn't nothing left for the coroner to set on." Pink sighed lugubriously.

Happy Jack grunted. "All the same, I bet yuh somebody gits hurt," he persisted doggedly.

"Yuh better heed the moral uh Cadwolloper's tale, Happy, or you'll be It," Weary warned. "The camp stove's my meat," he added pacifically. "Me and Glory bid for the pleasure uh snaking it up to old Berger's front door."

"By golly! he'll think he's bein' shivareed," chuckled Slim. "All he lacks is the bride."

"I heard that he's been playing up to the Countess this summer," Chip remarked with deceitful innocence. "Maybe he won't lack a bride very long."

Slim, having a weakness himself for the Flying U housekeeper, rose to the bait beautifully.

"By golly! I'll snake that stove *m'self,*" he declared. "I'd like t' git old Berger on the end uh m' rope oncet. I'd sure fix him a-plenty."

The Happy Family looked at one another and laughed, and some one told Slim to "Go after him." Slim said he sure would, and wondered what the joke was about.

They filed down a steep cattle trail into a dark, shadowy coulée; climbed laboriously the other side to the upper level, and let out their horses again.

Straight ahead, showing white under the glare of the full moon, stood the tent—a mile away, yet seeming almost within hail. True to their vigil, clear through the still night air came the sharp, staccato barking of the sheep-dogs.

Chip slowed down to a walk. "While this is pretty much of a picnic to the whole bunch," he said, "it's also an object-lesson we don't want Berger to forget overnight; so there ought to be some system about our onslaught. We'll all go to the tent in a bunch and rout out the herder; a couple of you must stay with him and the sheep, to keep

them going—in the right direction; it's a good twelve miles to Berger's, and we don't want to waste the whole night on the job.

"Slim's due at camp for middle guard, so I guess you two Jacks better manipulate the herder. The rest of us will fasten onto the camp truck—and we'll try and keep behind the band uh sheep; that will depend some on our horses."

"I'll gamble Glory won't amble in the rear to speak of," said Weary prophetically. "I brought him just so he could have some fun."

"You and Glory better take the stove in tow," laughed Chip. "He'll do his share toward starting the sheep—and once they're headed right, boys, fog 'em right along!"

"We sure will," promised the two Jacks solemnly.

Quietly, one might almost say stealthily, they rode up to the camp—a mere atom of a habitation in that wide reach of moonlit lonesomeness. To the Happy Family, used to living among their fellows a life that knew constant change, it seemed inexpressibly lonely.

"I'd go batty myself if I had to live all by my lonesome under a pocket-handkerchief like that," Cal remarked; and the others assented. The rank odor of many sheep was in their nostrils, and they hated it mightily. The dogs clamored hysterically at their approach, as if they knew them afar for enemies to their charge.

A man put his head out to look and listen, saw them almost close enough for speech, and stood waiting just outside the tent.

The Happy Family rode silently up and stopped before him.

"Are these Berger's sheep?" Chip began as a preliminary, but with that in his voice which made for trouble.

"That's what they are."

"Well, we came——" Chip broke off suddenly. The Happy Family listened unbelievingly, holding their breaths.

From within the cloth shelter, surprisingly close and distinct, came a fretful wailing and the subdued voice of a woman crooning caressing words. The Happy Family sat like petrified men.

"So help me Josephine, it's a little kid!" Pink woke first to amazed speech.

"By golly! it is, all right," muttered Slim blankly.

The herder spoke in matter-of-fact tone, answering Pink. "Yes, it's a kid —*my* kid. I've got my wife out here with me, and the baby's sick. Sheep-herding don't seem to agree with him very well."

"You ought to be thumped," said Chip hotly. "A woman and a baby in a sheep camp!"

"They're here because the doctor told 'em to come," defended the man. "He said a touch of outdoor life would do 'em both good. It's all right for *her;* but the little shaver don't seem to make out very well with the grub. He's always been used to lots uh milk; misses it like thunder."

"Well, won't canned milk fill the bill?" Cal demanded pugnaciously. But the herder shook his head vaguely.

"Kids are curious," he affirmed. "And, anyway, we ain't got any canned milk. Berger won't furnish it to his herders."

"The devil he won't!" snarled Pink, slipping sidewise in the saddle. "I—say! can't we see the kid?"

"Sure." The herder raised the tent-flap and called to his wife. She came, a tall, slim, hollow-eyed young woman, bareheaded—for the night was warm.

The baby seemed a soft little bundle of pink calico; he drooped over his mother's shoulder and curled his face down against her neck and whimpered fretfully. All that the Happy Family could see of him was the back of his fat little neck and his feet kicking impatiently in worn little red shoes, half-unbuttoned. They regarded him gravely and in silence.

Pink whistled softly, seductively. Peeping shyly with one eye, the baby hesitated, lifted his round little head, gold-tipped in the moonlight, and stared, wide-eyed, at Pink. There were tear traces on his soft, fat cheeks, and his mouth drooped pitifully at the corners. From the look of him, one might

guess that he found the world a rather joyless place and a tiresome.

Pink held out his gloved hands, and smiled; the smile of Pink was not to be resisted, even by a teething youngster who yearned mightily for milk. The baby, staring hard, reached out a hand tentatively; the woman smiled, and let him go.

The baby, perched before Pink on the saddle, sucked his fist industriously and eyed the Happy Family, and the horses which the Happy Family bestrode, solemnly—one might say suspiciously. The Happy Family stared back, not daring to move lest they frighten his babyship.

"You nervy—little—sinner!" cooed Pink, touching reverently, with his glove tips, the fine-spun gold of the baby's hair. "How'd yuh like to punch cows, eh? Think it would look good to yuh? You blamed—little rascal!"

The baby tilted back his head and looked gravely up at Pink, studied his face attentively, and said something quite unintelligible but wholly enthralling.

"Yuh say it's '*go-od*,' do yuh? Well, yuh got it right, first guess. Don't yuh ever go and be a sheep-herder, kid; you come along with us and learn t' punch cows."

Happy Jack leaned over and touched him lightly on the cheek. "Hello, old-timer," he croaked cheerfully, and smiled upon him.

It is not the fault of Happy Jack that his features are not pleasing to the eye, or that his most friendly smile falls but little short of diabolical. That is a misfortune, for which he is in no wise to blame.

The baby, however, did not take these things into consideration. He stared, drew back from the touch, lurched precipitately toward Pink for protection, and howled. The Happy Family regarded the offender with deep reproach, and Pink hastily surrendered the baby to his mother.

She carried him into the tent, crooning to him as only a mother knows how, and soothing him with whispered words and many kisses.

"I guess we'd better be going, boys," said Chip, and the Happy Family rode silently away into the radiant night without even a good-by flung back to the astonished herder.

"Mama! We're a hot bunch uh desperadoes," said Weary softly, when the little camp was far behind.

"By golly! Happy ought t' wear a mask!" blurted Slim. "He's enough t' make——"

"We ought to ride over and interview that so-and-so and thus-and-how and then-some old Dutch billy-goat of a Berger!" flared Cal Emmett wrathfully. "He ain't human. He ain't even a missing link. He's so far below the monkey tribe that they would look on him with scorn and reproach. A coyote would go 'way around him. He——"

"That's sure eloquent, but it ain't to the point," cut in Pink moodily. "There's oceans uh time and opportunity to call old Berger the names that hit his case. What I want to know is, Where's the closest place to get milk for that kid?"

"Hell! I dunno," said Cal. "That stingy old cuss ought t' be hung!"

"Like as not he's got to eat bacon and beans and stewed prunes," Jack Bates asserted gloomily. "Great diet for a little tad like him!"

"Did yuh notice how white-faced he looked?" asked Happy Jack mournfully. "He looked to me like he was about ready to cash in."

"Well," said Pink aggressively, "that kid is going to have some milk, if I have to go clear to Dry Lake for it!"

"Milk? It's all around yuh—run and catch it!" reminded Weary.

"That's the stuff—just what I was thinking of myself!" cried Jack Bates.

"Funny a fellow never thinks about things except in bunches," fleered Pink. "But that's right; there's barrels uh milk wandering around loose over these hills—and that little kid crying! Come on, boys, it's milking-time! Drive in the cows!"

Chip drew up and swung his horse half-around, facing them. "That kid needs more than milk, boys," he said, with quiet authority. "He needs a de-

cent place to stop, and a doctor. I'm going to ride home and tell the Old Man and the Little Doctor. I'll be back by sunrise. You needn't break camp till I come. If I can read the cards, that woman and baby'll find themselves in Flying U coulée before to-morrow night. I guess we'll have to postpone moving that camp—the Old Man can go in the air with Berger himself. You better come along, Slim, for guard."

His words met with the approval of all save Pink.

"But his nibs wants milk right *now*!" he protested.

Chip looked at him quizzically. "There's five of you left to grapple with the milk question," he replied calmly. "You can milk every blamed cow on the range, for all me."

When he had gone, the rest of the Happy Family drew together and consulted.

"I seen a little bunch down that last coulée we crossed, coming over," Happy Jack informed them. "'Tain't likely there's any cows among 'em, though; 'twouldn't be our luck."

"Well, we'll round them up and see," said Cal.

"What are we going to milk in?" asked Weary suddenly. "Our hats?"

Again they debated the question. Camp was too far away, and there was not a ranch nearer. Cal proposed going back to the herder for a tin can or something, but Pink would not hear to it. They would have to tell him what they were going to do, he said—and maybe they couldn't make good, after all. If they got the milk, all right. If not, the baby's mother wouldn't be so disappointed if she didn't expect any.

"Somebody'll have to sashay back to where our noon camp was," said Jack Bates at last. Don't yuh mind them two bottles uh beer we had? A beer-bottle would be the clear article."

They agreed that it would; and Weary, having the fastest horse, clattered away upon the errand while the four went in search of a cow.

Down in the coulée among the willows they ran upon a little bunch of cattle that scattered panic-stricken at their sudden approach. But the Happy Family know well their trade; they bunched them and drove them out into the open where the moon shone full, and where Weary could not fail to see them from afar. Then they stood guard and waited impatiently.

After what seemed a very long time he came galloping blithely toward them, and explained, in answer to Pink's reproaches, that Glory had got scared at a coal-oil can shining in the moonlight, and had bucked all over the flat with him.

"But I guess the bottle's all right," he added. "I thumped him over the head with it, once or twice, though. Who's the pretty milkmaid?"

"Not me," Happy Jack made haste to deny. "I'll rope out a cow for yuh, but I draw the line at milking."

"I pass," said Jack Bates with decision.

"Cadwolloper, you started this game; it's your ante," said Weary.

Pink took the bottle and wanted to know what they were all standing around there for; why didn't they get the cow? He said that they looked like they were waiting their turn to speak a piece in Sunday-school.

So Cal took down his rope and rode in among the cattle, and presently there was much commotion in that particular coulée bottom, with a lank, vicious-eyed spotted cow as the chief disturber.

"Tie onto her, you snails!" yelled Cal, throwing his weight on one stirrup to keep his saddle from turning.

Jack Bates went to the rescue, roping her by the hind feet and jerking her down.

Weary and Jack jumped from their horses and held her until Cal's rope was transferred to her front feet, so that she lay stretched upon her side, helpless and disgusted, and waiting shrinkingly for the searing-iron, which ordinarily would follow.

Happy Jack held her head down, and Weary perched comfortably upon her rump.

Pink got down on his knees and held the bottle close, and sent a tiny, white

stream trickling down the neck. Then he stopped and looked uncertainly at Weary.

"Say! will his nibs care if there's a flavor uh beer?" he wanted to know. "I can smell it pretty loud."

The Happy Family debated the question gravely. Happy Jack thought it would give the kid colic, and most likely kill it. Pink called him names and looked worried. Cal said to let 'er go and take chances, and Weary refused to commit himself, one way or the other.

In the end, Pink left them to hold the cow while he went away up the coulée to a spring, where he might rinse the bottle.

Milking a cow sounds a simple matter; but under the circumstances, Weary said, it would have been quicker and easier to ride clear to the home ranch, which was twenty miles away, after milk. Happy Jack, still holding the cow's head to the ground, mournfully agreed with him.

The spring was farther off than Pink had bargained for, and the four waited long. Happy Jack and Weary rolled cigarettes, and smoked the while they invented new and horrible things they would like to do to old Berger; and Cal and Jack Bates, sitting their horses like statues in the moonlight, with their ropes taut and showing straight, black shadows beneath, listened, and did stunts with their own imaginations.

The cow sighed deeply at the outrage and rolled her eyes venomously, and perhaps did some plotting on her own account.

Then they heard a cheery whistle, and Pink came out of black shadow into the light.

"I guess we're ready for business now," he remarked. "Who'd think getting a pint uh fresh milk in a cow country was such a contract? Soh, bossy! One thing—thank the Lord yuh can't kick the pail over! which is a privilege much enjoyed by your civilized sisters in the East. Nice old bossy cow—how d' yuh like milking-time? Ain't it swell?"

Away in the shadows cast by the coulée rim a calf blatted lonesomely. Bossy cow opened her frothy jaws, lifted up her voice, and bawled answer; again and again, hoarsened and unnatural with the black rage she was in, her voice went bellowing weirdly down between the high coulée walls.

"She ain't what yuh could call a prize milker," Pink complained, after an industrious minute, holding the bottle up disgustedly between his eyes and the moon. "She's on the bum, if yuh ask me. Shut up, yuh darned old skate! Happy, stuff your hat down her blamed throat, can't yuh?"

"Mmm-*bawhhh!*"

Pink, squatted on his spurred heels, redoubled his efforts. His hat was pushed far back on his yellow curls, which lay in damp rings on his forehead, and his lips were pursed rosily with absorption in his task. The moon shining down upon the strange group softened his face into a spirituelle beauty quite at variance with his general disposition.

Weary watched him with worship in his eyes; if Pink had been a woman, Weary's Little Schoolma'am would have found in him an exceedingly dangerous rival.

"Take a sneak, you fellows! The hull bunch is onto us with blood in their eyes!" yelled Cal warningly.

Weary and Happy Jack made for their horses; when a bunch of range stock come rushing to the call of distress from one of their number it is not good for man to be afoot.

Pink was one who takes chances. He looked up, shifted his weight, and went on milking—until the ropes, loosened through the carelessness of Cal and Jack, freed the cow. She came near upsetting Pink, and got up on the fight, whirled, and charged him savagely. But if Pink took chances, he was not to be caught unawares. He went zigzagging like a frightened rabbit to his horse, and went into the saddle with a bound, still clinging to the bottle.

"Never spilt a drop!" he exulted. "But there ain't enough for one good swallow; there's just enough to insult his royal nibs and make him howl for

more. You'll have to deal me another cow."

To rope another cow out of that particular bunch of excitement would be to invite trouble. The Happy Family, after a moment's inspection, decided that there were no good milkers in the outfit, anyway, and rode away down the coulée after fresh material—and their greatest worry was the time they were wasting.

From starting out, in wrathful mood, to make war on Berger's sheep and herder, they had come to scouring the range for a cow to milk, that a teething baby might be fed—and not a man of them saw anything incongruous in the change of occupation.

They reached the mouth of the coulée, left it, and rode up a long ridge to the level, and wandered on, galloping five abreast steadily over to the next nearest coulée, their speech sharpened by disappointment, their great, warm hearts listening sorely to a baby's hungry whimper.

"Say! it's hell to think of a kid like that going hungry," gritted Pink, and raised the bottle for the third time between his eyes and the moon, as if, by long looking, he might somehow increase the depth of the dark strip at the bottom.

"There ain't half a cupful," he said disconsolately. "I wonder if it'd be any use to take it to his nibs. It might help some."

"Wait till we look down this next coulée," comforted Weary. "It most always has a bunch uh stock in it—on account of a creek that runs through. Next time we'll haze the rest uh the bunch so far off they can't hear the row. Oh, we'll get a full hand next time, Cadwolloper; don't you worry."

Pink smiled at Weary and permitted himself to be comforted, and wanted to know if they had noticed the way his nibs' hair shone in the moonlight, and if he didn't look solemn at them. Then he shook the bottle again, and swore softly.

In the coulée it was shadowy and dim, for the walls were high and the moon was sliding down to the west. In the half-light they found some cattle lying in the crisp grass beside a willow clump, sleeping peacefully. They surrounded them and peered sharply for that which they sought, singled out a big, white cow that stood and eyed them wonderingly, roped and threw her as they had done with the first, and drove the others far down the coulée. Then, with Happy Jack sitting on her neck, and Weary on her rump, Pink knelt as before, and milked and milked, until the bottle was full and dripping foam all round the rim. He stood up and gloated at the whiteness.

"We've done the trick, boys, and his royal nibs can sleep with his stummy full—barring accidents. She's a peach, this old bossy. She never batted an eye. You can let her up, now, and we'll drift with this."

Happy Jack, fumbling about her head, suddenly fell back into the grass and roared. "It's Adams' old Molly! Tied down Adams' old Molly, that wouldn't move an eyewinker 'less yuh told her to! Tell her to 'h'ist," forty miles from nowhere on the range, and she'd rare back her left leg and stand till next round-up! Whee! but you're a chesty bunch uh rannies! Talk about my roping a steer in the dark well——"

They let her up, and the white cow eyed them reproachfully, sidled off a pace, and fell to chewing her cud regretfully.

"Now, wouldn't that jostle yuh?" asked Pink, and no one replied. "Well, anyway, we got the milk," he added, and climbed carefully upon his horse.

The Happy Family grinned in the waning light, got upon their horses, and filed slowly up the steep bank. At the top, Pink looked over his shoulder, back down the coulée to where a white shape showed dimly against the dark willow growth.

"Wouldn't that jostle yuh?" he repeated pensively. Then they galloped back over the prairie in the waning moonlight, their shadows long and fleeing before them—back to the tiny white tent where his nibs, the baby, whimpered fretfully in his sleep.

The Adventure of the Bahama Cay

By J. Egerton

Author of "A Mesmeric Mystery," "A Prisoner of the Mind," Etc.

[Explanatory Note.—Tommy Williams, the moving spirit in Mr. Egerton's exciting novelette, was first introduced to the readers of "The Popular" in the February issue, and reappeared in a story called "A Mesmeric Mystery," in the April issue. For the benefit of those who have not read these stories a little explanation is necessary. Tommy Williams is a New York artist who makes some experiments in hypnotism, with remarkable success. He interests a newspaper man in the subject and the two go in search of treasure hidden by old-time pirates of the Spanish Main. They take with them Rounsival, a Southerner, a descendant of one of the men who sailed with Blackbeard, the famous buccaneer. Tommy hypnotizes Rounsival and makes him assume the character of Blackbeard, with the result that the pirates' treasure is discovered and secretly carried on board the New Yorker's yacht *Mystic*. Rounsival is released from the hypnotic spell and the *Mystic* begins her return voyage when a storm strikes her. It is at this point that "The Adventure of the Bahama Cay" begins.]

(*A Complete Novel*)

TOMMY WILLIAMS was of a hopeful disposition, but I fully expected to see traces of discouragement in his expression when the rising sun should reveal the full details of the damage we had sustained. For three days and nights we had been in the grip of that terror of the Atlantic, a West Indian hurricane, and we were now rolling and plunging in the dead swell which the twister had left behind it when it whirled off to mid-ocean.

The little *Mystic,* which had sailed from New York as trim and pretty a yacht as ever passed through the Narrows, was now a mastless, disfigured hulk, rolling helplessly and dipping the stump of a broken bowsprit into the swells, while the rattling of the pumps and the steady stream of water which came from their spouts indicated that the damage was not confined to the rigging.

The fact that safely stowed in the cabin was a treasure worth many kings' ransoms, of which we were the undisputed owners, was poor consolation under the circumstances, and I would have gladly bartered my share of it to be once more at a desk in the office of the *Howler,* writing sensational stories of commonplace happenings for the usual remuneration of a reporter.

The sun, when it finally appeared above the horizon with the suddenness with which it comes up in the tropics, showed little that was encouraging; the decks had been swept bare by the seas, there was not a trace of a small boat, and on all sides of us was a tumbling, heavy swell; the horizon-line unbroken by any sign of land.

Tommy, who was hanging on to the stump of the mainmast, took in the situation fully, from the sailors working steadily at the pumps to the shattered flagstaff hanging over the stern, but there was a grin on his Mephistophelean face as he looked at me.

"Them as is born to be hanged will never be drowned—which leaves little doubt as to our eventual ending," he said cheerfully. "I am convinced that the worst of our troubles are over."

"It certainly can't get much worse," I replied, trying to emulate his hopefulness. "We seem to be still afloat, which is a great point in our favor."

"Not so blame still as we might be,"

he answered, when he had picked himself up from the scuppers, an unusually heavy swell having tossed the yacht about just as he released his hold of the mast. "But as you say, that is a point in our favor, so let's interview Jackson and see what the chances are for remaining above water."

"They're commencing to suck air, so I guess we can keep ahead of the leaks, all right, Mr. Williams," answered the sailing-master, when Tommy asked him how badly the hull was strained. "She's a stanch little craft, or we would have been with Davy Jones before this; and with some sort of a jury-rig we ought to be able to make land."

"Have you any idea how far we are away from it?" I asked eagerly, but Jackson shook his head.

"Not an observation for three days, and traveling in a circle and on our beam-ends most of the time, has caused me to lose my bearings," he said, laughing, "but I'll find out as soon as I can shoot the sun."

The observation showed that, notwithstanding the furious rate at which we had traveled, we must have gone practically over the same course in the grip of the circular storm, for we were within sixty miles of the place where it first struck us, and still within the Bahamas.

The nearest land was a small cay about twenty miles to the eastward, inhabited only by a few families of negro spongers, and to that we decided to make our way as soon as a jury-mast could be rigged from the spare spars in the hold. The propeller had been twisted off in the storm, but the rudder was only slightly damaged, and Jackson promised that we should be under headway before night.

Now that the storm had left us, Duck Sing, our cook, who had spent the three days in the galley, howling pitifully to strange gods and burning incense and bits of red paper to propitiate the devils of the air, resumed his ordinary avocation, and soon served a hot meal, the first cooked food we had tasted since before the hurricane struck us.

Rounsival, whom even the terror of death could not relieve of seasickness, was groaning in his berth, and the information that we should probably not go to the bottom seemed to afford him but small comfort.

"The question which we have to decide now is, What are we going to do about that treasure?" said Tommy, as we watched the sailors bending a sail on the jury-mast after luncheon. "I hadn't counted on this contingency, and we can't call it safe until we are out of the Bahamas, for if we land on the cay we are still in British jurisdiction, and if the treasure is discovered it will be confiscated by the crown."

"I wish that something with a sound hull and serviceable rigging would come alongside and take us and our belongings on board," I replied, looking anxiously around the horizon-line for a possible sail. "I've had all of this small yacht sailing that I want in the hurricane season."

"Our last state will be worse than our first if we have to ask for assistance," said Tommy, shaking his head. "You know that salvage is apportioned on a percentage basis; the greater the peril the larger the percentage, and we would be in a nice fix if that treasure had to be appraised, and we were asked for an explanation of how we came by it."

"There's enough and to spare if we get a tithe of it to New York," I answered a little impatiently. "For my part, I don't think we are in any position to dictate terms, and we are lucky if we get home alive."

"I'm not crossing bridges until I come to them," said Tommy thoughtfully, "but it isn't only a question of retaining possession of what we have acquired; for it may be necessary to save our skins as well. It would be serious enough if it were only a matter of defending our right and title to the stuff in a court of law, but you must remember that there is enough temptation in those boxes to lead to the cutting of throats. If we should be hailed by another vessel, the master of it would not waste time in transferring a lot of entomological specimens, and if he once

felt the weight of those boxes, I imagine he would want to find out what kind of butterflies they contained. Our only chance is to get this particular hooker in such condition that she can carry us home; and I am free to confess that I am afraid to take the responsibility until we have had a chance to see what damage has been done. We know what we are gambling for, but the crew have no share in the venture, and one bad blow, in our present helpless condition, would inevitably result in the loss of the yacht."

"Why not give 'em a share in it, then?" I asked. "Offer a lump sum in prize-money if we make an American port without assistance, and put it up to them. If we succeed, there will be no difficulty in paying the money, and if we fail, they will share the loss, or, at the worst, we will all go down together."

The suggestion appealed to Tommy, and when the yacht finally gained headway under the jury-rig, he mustered the crew and placed the proposition before them. His offer was a generous one, enough to give each man a share which would make him independent of the sea for many a day, but not large enough to excite suspicion. The reward was to be given if we reached an American harbor without depending upon any outside help, and the sailors accepted the risk with alacrity. Jackson, the sailing-master, was to receive a double share, and he smiled as he nodded his assent to the proposition.

"If it is humanly possible to bring the *Mystic* into port we'll do it," he said. "I never liked the idea of paying salvage, but there is always the danger that these Bahama wreckers will make a derelict out of us, whether we will or no. I have had one experience with 'em, and I know what they can do."

"We have a pretty fair supply of arms on board, and they won't do it except over my dead body," said Tommy grimly; and his declaration was greeted by another cheer from the crew.

Duck Sing served a ration of grog to all hands to seal the contract, which was duly entered in the log, and Tommy and I went below to report to Rounsival. He was cursing impartially the waters above, on, and under the earth, and his chief anxiety was about the time when we might expect to reach the cay and come to anchor in still water.

"I wish to state, right heah," he said, with as much earnestness as if he were testifying in a court of law, "that if we-all evah get to a place where my feet feel the solid yearth beneath 'em, on that spot I remain foh the rest of my days. This followin' the sea is not a career which I admire."

Tommy laughed good-naturedly at the helpless giant who was apparently in deadly earnest, but I felt that it would be a relief when we could finally say good-by to him. In spite of his good-natured expression, the vision of Blackbeard was always before me when I looked at him, and he was too closely associated with that period of storm and stress on the island of New Providence to make association with him pleasant.

The *Mystic* limped along slowly during the night, and at daylight we were close to the cay, a low-lying piece of coral rock with a few scrub pines and dwarfed palms surrounding a cluster of huts on the center of it. Our presence was quickly discovered by the islanders, and the entire population swarmed to the beach and tumbled into the small boats which were moored there, making hastily for the yacht, which seemed legitimate prey in its disabled condition.

"It is fortunate this island contains but a small population," remarked Jackson, who was carefully testing the balance of a stout capstan-bar. "We can hold off that gang, but my advice is not to let a nigger over the side."

The excited jabbering of the occupants of the boats came to us distinctly over the smooth water, and their ebony-black faces, disreputable clothing, and the eagerness with which they raced toward us brought to our minds all the stories of brutal treatment of shipwrecked mariners by the wreckers of the Bahamas. Each of us instinctively

seized a weapon for defense, and we gathered at the side of the yacht which the boats were rapidly approaching.

"Boat ahoy! Way enough there!" shouted Jackson, as the leading boat came within a hundred yards of us. The negroes ceased rowing at the command, while they drifted slowly nearer. "We are not in need of assistance," Jackson added, "and will not allow any one aboard."

"Mebbe we see about dat bimeby," answered the negro who was apparently in command, and the oars again dipped in the water, bringing the boat close alongside. He was a tremendous specimen of his race, broad-shouldered and deep of chest, with a brutish and degraded face. "Mebbe we tak yo' lil' boat in harbor, yo' all mak' us one nice present."

"I'll make a present of this bar to the first one of you that tries to come on board without permission," roared Jackson, as the other boats came up and he saw that they were forming for a simultaneous boarding.

I had not been seriously alarmed about a possible attack by the negroes, for it seemed incredible that in this twentieth century, in a colony which was under British rule, a desperate gang of wreckers should be permitted to exist.

All doubts on the subject were set at rest within the next five minutes, however; for, without waiting for further parley, the boats drew alongside, and in spite of our resistance the jabbering crews swarmed aboard.

We fought like cornered rats, using capstan-bars, belaying-pins, and whatever came to hand, and, although several of the negroes were knocked overboard or stretched on the deck with broken heads, we were overcome by sheer force of numbers and driven below.

Tommy and I had managed to reach the cabin, while the sailors had dropped into the forward hold, carrying Jackson, who had been knocked out early in the fight, with them. It was an unfortunate division of forces, for all of the arms were in the cabin, but Tommy and I seized revolvers and prepared to defend the narrow companionway, which was the only entrance.

To our great surprise, we were not molested, the negroes apparently being satisfied with the possession of the deck, and, after they had fastened the hatch over the companionway, making us prisoners in the cabin, we could hear their excited jabbering and the patter of their bare feet on the deck.

"They have put it up to us," exclaimed Tommy savagely, as he overhauled the rifles and revolvers in our small armory; and the expression on his face boded ill to the negroes when he snapped the last cartridge into the magazine of a Winchester. "They have gone so far in this little adventure that they will carry it to its legitimate conclusion if we don't beat them off before they pile us on the beach; and that conclusion will be reached from the premises that dead men tell no tales."

Rounsival, who was still prostrate with seasickness, groaned uneasily. Tommy glanced toward him with a grim smile. "You'll have to forget that little indisposition of yours and turn out to help us, unless you want to have your throat quietly cut in your bunk," he said; and the Southerner looked at him incredulously.

"If you-all will just set me on the solid ground, I'll do anything in that line that I can," he answered; "but I'd like to know what all this row is about."

Tommy stated our position in a few words, and convinced Rounsival of its seriousness, but he only groaned helplessly.

"I would suttenly admire to help you-all, and keep my own throat whole for the swallowing of several hearty meals which ought to be owing to me, but I'm weak as a cat, and I reckon I'll have to take what's comin' to me right here," he said dolefully, after a fruitless effort to stand up.

Tommy looked at him curiously for a moment as we heard the loud gabbling of the negroes on deck; and he motioned to me to hold the companionway as he went to the side of the bunk.

I instinctively felt that he was going to hypnotize the Southerner again, and in spite of our small numbers and our dire need of reenforcements, I doubted the wisdom of the step. The memory of the fiend incarnate whom he had roused in Nassau was vividly before me, and I started to protest, but Tommy sharply ordered me to my post, and in a moment Rounsival was under his control and sleeping peacefully.

"Unless I'm much mistaken, we'll clear the decks in short order when Blackbeard, in the person of his worthy descendant, goes into action," he said, as he placed the tips of his fingers on the sleeping giant's eyelids.

"And there's no knowing what'll happen if he gets beyond your control again," I answered doubtfully, but Tommy laughed at my fears.

"There will be no case of guilty conscience if he cleans out the entire settlement," he said. "These brutes have brought it on themselves, and—look out, there!"

Interested in Tommy's hypnotic experiment I had relaxed my vigilance, and a powerful black arm reached down the companionway and grasped the Winchester which lay in the hollow of my arm. I was struggling to retain possession of it, when there was a loud report in my ear, and the black arm suddenly became limp, while a spurt of blood almost blinded me. Tommy had shot over my shoulder, shattering the negro's elbow-joint, and with a howl of pain he drew back.

"Now, be careful!" commanded Tommy. "You must hold that companionway at all costs until I arrange with Rounsival to become temporarily his respected ancestor."

I felt chagrined that my carelessness had so nearly given us into the hands of the blacks, and made no further protest. I was a very busy man for the next few minutes, for the negroes, enraged by our resistance, gathered about the companionway, shouting and cursing to encourage each other to attack us.

Behind me I could hear Tommy instructing Rounsival in his part. He was to be Teach, alias Blackbeard, the pirate captain, in command of a buccaneer schooner on which the black members of the crew had mutinied. One of them lent verisimilitude by springing at me through the companionway as Rounsival rose from his bunk, and I shot him without compunction, for there was murder on his brutish face, and a large sheath-knife fell from his hand as he pitched to the deck.

The cabin was filled with smoke, and I could not see the faces of my companions, but I heard a snarl of rage behind me, and Rounsival thrust me aside and rushed up the companionway to the deck. It was not the Rounsival of ten minutes before; it was the veritable Blackbeard, a demon incarnate with the light of carnage in his eye.

He had disregarded the firearms, but carried a broadax which we had used in cutting away the wreckage of our rigging, and when Tommy and I stumbled to the deck after him, he was whirling it about his head and driving the swarming negroes forward. One of them, his head split fairly to the chin, lay dead in the scuppers, and I realized that Rounsival, single-handed, had gained control of the deck. The negroes, who were armed only with sheath-knives and such improvised weapons as they had picked up on board, made no stand against him, but dropped over the bows into the sea as rats leave a sinking ship.

Rounsival, cursing and raving, turned to me, tore the rifle from my hands, and before I could prevent him, put a bullet through the nearest woolly pate which bobbed above the water. We had the ship, and it was no part of our plan to commit unnecessary murder, but the man was crazy with the lust for blood, and turned on Tommy savagely when he struck up the rifle which was aimed at another negro.

"Wake up, Rounsival!" shouted Tommy, his slim hands making a rapid pass in front of the demoniacal face. "Wake up, man, and be yourself!"

The only answer was a curse, and Tommy instinctively shrank back as the great fist was raised to strike. I

had run forward to unfasten the hatch which held Jackson and the sailors prisoners, and Tommy joined me as Jackson climbed to the deck. Only three of the sailors followed him, for one was coughing out his life from a knife-wound in the chest.

"It's gone back on me again," exclaimed Tommy ruefully, as he looked toward Rounsival, who had taken the wheel and was skilfully maneuvering the disabled yacht toward the narrow passage in the reef, as if he were steering into a well-remembered shelter. "If I hadn't dodged that blow his fist would have cracked my head like an egg-shell. Perhaps it's just as well to leave him in command until we careen. He must know every foot of these waters."

There was no choice, for Rounsival suddenly roared out an order, and so perfect was his mastery of the yacht that Jackson, never stopping to question his authority, quickly sprang forward and cast the lead.

"By the mark, three fathoms, sir," he sang out, and Rounsival shifted the helm a trifle as the next cast indicated shoaling water.

Perhaps it was because the past few weeks had been so full of adventures which seemed incredible, but for some reason it seemed perfectly natural to be sailing with Blackbeard in command on the waters which he had known so well, although I wondered that Jackson and the sailors accepted the situation so readily. I saw Tommy quietly beckon to them to follow him into their quarters forward, and when they returned to the deck they looked apprehensively at the man at the wheel.

We had passed safely through the entrance in the reef, and Jackson, relieved from his duty with the lead, was looking about in a dazed manner, the strangeness of the situation appealing to him now that the emergency was over, when Tommy approached him and quickly made the familiar passes over his face.

I could not hear his instructions to the sailing-master when he had thrown him into the hypnotic trance, but Tommy enlightened me as the schooner glided quietly past the negro village over the clear water of the lagoon.

Rounsival was occupied with the navigation of the yacht, and muttered to himself as he scanned the village and the women and children on the beach to which the swimming negroes were heading.

"I've taken another desperate chance—it was the only thing to do," said Tommy, in a low voice. "I knew that there would be mutiny and murder from Rounsival's method of enforcing obedience with the crew in normal condition, so I have hypnotized Jackson and the men, and transformed them into buccaneers under Blackbeard's command. He can do what is necessary for refitting better than any of us. It's making the best of a bad bargain, for with Rounsival armed as he is we cannot overpower him, and he would start killing at the first sign of disobedience. We, of course, will obey him until we get a chance to again become masters of the situation. The man below is dead, and Duck Sing will not bother us."

"By blood! I'll not leave a nigger alive on this cay," said Rounsival savagely, as two of them reached the shore and stood on the beach shaking their fists at the yacht. "I marooned three men here the last time I entered this harbor—weak-kneed, lily-livered whelps they were—but when I sail out this time I'll leave food for vultures and land-crabs to fatten on. Throw over that carrion, you lubbers."

He pointed to the body of the negro lying on the deck, and Tommy and Jackson picked it up and threw it over the rail. A quick gathering of long black objects as it sank to the bottom indicated that there would be a rapid disappearance of this material piece of evidence, and without orders Tommy and I carried out the body of the negro which lay in the cabin, and threw it over to meet a like fate.

Rounsival selected a smooth spot on the beach which was evidently perfectly familiar to him, and headed the schooner for it. The crew, at his command,

quickly lowered the small sail, and the yacht took the ground lightly and remained fast on the white coral sand.

"Plumb high water," said Rounsival, as she grounded and he relinquished the wheel. "Lively now, bully boys! Out with the stores and prepare to careen. We'll have her trim and shipshape in short order, and then we'll teach that black vermin a lesson, and off for the Spanish Main to gather doubloons for our lasses in Nassau town."

He went to the cabin companionway, carrying the blood-stained broadax in his hand; and Tommy and I followed him. It was a queer position that we found ourselves in. Here was Rounsival, the last surviving descendant of Edward Teach, alias Blackbeard, the infamous pirate, transformed into his savage ancestor by the wonderful mesmeric power of Tommy Williams.

In his proper mind and person an indolent, good-natured rice-planter from South Carolina, ignorant of the sea and its ways, he became in an instant, at the command of this slightly built artist, a complete sailor, inheriting the knowledge of ships and the waters on which we sailed from a man who had been dead close to two centuries. And with this knowledge he also inherited all of the reckless bravery and cruelty of disposition which make Blackbeard's record stand out in bold relief from the history of his companions in crime.

He had already killed two men in getting possession of the yacht, and we knew that he meditated reprisals on the inhabitants of the cay, the very thought of which, from our knowledge of Blackbeard's method of torture, made us shudder with terror.

"If you can see a fair chance of overpowering him, take it; I will back you up," Tommy whispered to me as Rounsival's broad shoulders disappeared through the companionway, and I nodded assent as we followed him.

He apparently anticipated no trouble from us, for he had thrown the ax on a locker, and stood unarmed as he looked at us expectantly. But we knew his great strength, and felt that we were powerless, for bare-handed he could have crushed us, debarred as we were by our scruples from inflicting serious injury upon him.

"What are you two men doing here when I have ordered all hands to lighten ship?" he demanded fiercely. "Send the steward with a glass of rum, and get back to your work or it will be the worse for you, you skulking brutes!"

I felt an almost hysterical desire to laugh as Tommy meekly saluted and turned to leave the cabin, but one glance from Rounsival's blazing eyes banished all thought of merriment, and I was glad to follow closely at his heels.

"We're in a devilish tight place," admitted Tommy, as we walked forward after transmitting the order for rum to Duck Sing. "All we need now to fill our cup of happiness to the brim is to have him start rummaging those boxes and discover the treasure. You may remember the fate of the men who helped Blackbeard to bury it, and I don't believe that we would fare much better at the hands of his precious descendant, for he'd make shark meat of us without losing any sleep over it."

"We'll have to make a run for it, if he does discover it," I assented, a cold shiver running down my spine as I remembered the rending of the bodies we had thrown overboard; but Tommy shook his head.

"It's as well to fight it out here as to fall into the hands of those black devils up the beach," he said, with a grim smile. "If any fool hypnotist has been recalling *their* ancestors' habits to them, we'd stand a good chance of being served up as 'long pig' in a savory stew. The best thing for us to do is to help get this yacht in trim and wait for a favorable opportunity to put Blackbeard to sleep forever."

Under Jackson's directions the sailors were getting up the stores, spare anchors, etc., from the forehold and piling them on the deck, while a crowd of negroes stood at a respectable distance up the beach, jabbering and gesticulating as they reckoned up the prey which had so far escaped them. It spoke volumes for the completeness of

the transformation which Tommy's hypnotic powers had worked when Jackson picked up the Winchester lying on the deck and wantonly fired at them. The crew laughed as the negroes scattered, and chaffed Jackson at his poor marksmanship, for his bullet had kicked up the sand in front of them.

"You have raised the devil in these men, too," I said, as we went to work, and I was sorry I had spoken when I looked at Tommy's face, for I could see that he was frightfully impressed by this last evidence of the mischief he had done.

"You, Duck Sing, and myself are the only ones on board who wouldn't cut a man's throat for the price of a drink, and it's all my doing," he groaned. "If my death would put things right, I'd gladly pay the price; but I'm the very one who must remain alive if this miserable tangle is ever to be straightened out. It's an awful responsibility, but I've made up my mind to one thing; before I'll permit any more violence I'll shoot Rounsival. Look there!"

I turned, and saw the Southerner coming toward us. He had transformed himself into a walking arsenal. A broad cutlas and not less than four pistols hung from his belt, and a Winchester rested on his arm.

"I'm going to get a boat," he said, after he had cast an approving eye on the work. "Two of you men come with me to bring it back."

Tommy and I quickly dropped the rope at which we had been hauling, and followed him as he dropped over the bow onto the hard sand left by the receding tide and walked toward the huts. I saw with relief that our approach had been observed, for the negroes scuttled away from the opposite side, Rounsival accelerating their speed by a random shot.

"I'll carbonado a few of them before I leave as an example to mutineers, and the rest of 'em will fetch good prices in the Havannah," he said, with a chuckle; and I saw visions of the *Mystic* turned into a slaver, and the pack of us being hanged at the end of the cruise. The village was squalid enough—a score of thatched huts with the crudest furniture, and all about pieces of wreckage, fishing-nets, and sponging dredges.

"No plunder there unless the carbonado makes them tell of something buried, but I'll burn the place to light us out of the harbor," he continued in a matter-of-fact voice, as he examined the boats pulled up on the beach. "Here, we'll take this one." Tommy and I tried to push the clumsy thing off, but we could not budge it until Rounsival put his great shoulder to it, and, with very little effort, sent it into the water.

"And you call yourselves men and gentlemen of fortune," he said jeeringly, as we scrambled in and he took up the tiller-ropes. "Put your backs into the stroke now and send her along."

His scornful remarks as to our ability were interlarded with curses and obscenity, but we were so relieved that there had been no violence at the village, that we bore his taunts and abuse cheerfully and rowed with a will.

Again on board, Rounsival was a hard taskmaster. Our backs ached before the stores had all been landed above tide-line, but he kept all hands steadily at it, and was not above lending his own great strength to the task.

We found the damage below the water-line to be slight; a couple of planks had been started by the battering of the wreckage against the hull, and the copper sheathing was ripped in several places. Rounsival announced that another day would see us ready for sea; and after supper, which we all ate together on the beach, he raised no objection when Tommy and I went to our usual bunks in the cabin.

At high tide the next morning we hauled the *Mystic* off with a cable from a kedge, which we carried out into the lagoon with a stolen small boat. Rounsival, making another raid on the village, which again became deserted at our approach, procured a couple of masts—the relics of some former shipwreck. It was wonderful to see him direct the work; and before we slept that night the new masts were stepped,

and there remained little to do to make us ready for sea next morning.

The sailors were bending on new sails, and Rounsival was below in the cabin, when we were startled by a volley of oaths, followed by a pistol-shot, and Duck Sing, squealing with terror, rushed up the companionway and ran to us for protection.

"Mista Lounsival him tly killee me!" he panted. "Him got plenty new gold joss, and when me come catch dishee him makee bobbery, allee samee clazy man!"

Tommy and I looked at each other in consternation—the "plenty new gold joss" could mean only one thing. Rounsival had discovered the treasure! Our worst fears were realized, and we were only surprised that he had not immediately rushed on deck.

"If he attempts violence I'll shoot him," said Tommy doggedly, keeping his eye on the companionway while he nervously fingered the butt of his revolver. "If he takes it calmly he is meditating treachery, and our lives are not worth the boxes the stuff is packed in until he is once more himself."

Rounsival came on deck as Tommy finished speaking, but he paid no attention to us, and remained near the companionway looking up at the rigging.

"We'll get under way at eight bells," he said, grinning, as Duck Sing bolted into the galley and closed the door. "Here, you two, you'll berth forward now—equality's sunk when we go to sea. I am not going to take any slaves aboard, so there's plenty of room in the forehold. Get up your anchor as soon as you're ready, there, and we'll drop down and burn that village and let the niggers dance a little by firelight for us."

The sailors, in their normal state as decent and orderly a lot of men as ever shipped in a yacht's crew, gave a cheer at this proposal of wanton cruelty, and I was sick at heart as I foresaw the torture and destruction which would follow, and realized our powerlessness to prevent it. The dead sailor had been buried with no other ceremony than promises of sanguinary revenge upon the negroes, and I knew that it would be useless to plead for mercy.

The rigging was well set up with the spare cordage and sails which we carried, and all traces of fighting had been washed from the deck. Rounsival was apparently satisfied with the state of the boat, but he was scowling and surly, puzzled by his find in the cabin; and I was startled when Tommy, after a significant glance at me, walked up to him and touched his cap.

"Can we get our things from the cabin?" he asked, and Rounsival gave a surly permission, but he followed closely at our heels, and kept a suspicious eye on us as we busied ourselves collecting a few necessary articles.

I was watching Tommy closely, for I knew that he was desperate and would take any chance, and when I saw him seize a blanket from the bunk, and with a quick jerk throw it over Rounsival's head, we both sprang at him, and the three of us rolled on the deck together.

Unexpected as the attack had been, and choked and hampered by the blanket as the Southerner was, his strength was still too much for us. I received a terrific blow on the side of the head which sent me half-stunned into a corner, and when I recovered my senses Rounsival was kneeling on Tommy's chest, his great hand on his throat, while he swore roundly at Jackson and the sailors, who, attracted by the noise of the struggle, were peering into the cabin.

"Throw me a coil of rope and get back to your work," he said, with a volley of curses. "I can handle a dozen puny mutineers like these."

Jackson returned in a moment and threw the rope down the companionway.

"Get the anchor up and all sail set," growled Rounsival, as he bound Tommy's hands behind him in a thoroughly workmanlike manner. "I'll let the niggers go this time, but we'll have some amusement with this pair of gallows birds when we get in blue water." He threw Tommy roughly aside and bound me; so tightly that the rope cut into my wrists.

"Don't think that I'll spare you," he snarled, looking down at us savagely. "I'd have done for you, anyway, for you know too much to live, and the only reason I don't cut your hearts out now is that I want some information from you before you go to Davy Jones. I'll get it, too, if I have to flay your skins off by inches."

"Listen to me—wake up—wake up, Rounsival!" screamed Tommy.

The giant looked at him in amazement. "Has fright made you crazy?" he asked contemptuously. "Ronceville is at Nassau with Hornigold, but you'll be food for fishes before we reach there."

"I shouldn't have let you in for this, old chap," said Tommy, in a doleful voice when Rounsival had left us. "It seemed like a fair chance, and I thought it might be our last. You can see that my power over him has gone; the man is Blackbeard in every fiber of his body."

My head was ringing from the effect of the blow, the rope cut into my wrists horribly, and I felt that our remaining span of life was short, but Tommy had been such a loyal and generous friend that I made an effort to be cheerful.

"It looks as if we were to be a vicarious sacrifice for the niggers," I said, forcing a smile. "We're not dead yet, but if it comes to the worst, we'll take the bad together as we took the good. What information do you suppose the brute wants from us?"

"It's about the treasure, of course," answered Tommy dolefully. "I wish that we'd never heard of the blame stuff."

Silently I echoed his wish, and we lay quietly listening to the trampling of feet as the sails were hoisted, and when the yacht heeled over we knew that they had caught the wind and that our period of grace was short.

"I think I'd rather be taking my chances with the niggers ashore," said Tommy ruefully, as Jackson's voice, calling the soundings, reached us. "We shall soon be in blue water, and then it's all up with us. I wonder if he'll test the new yard-arm with our weights."

It didn't seem a pleasant thing to speculate on, and I closed my eyes to try to think of something pleasanter. I was roused from a memory of our triumphant sailing from Nassau ten days before by a low exclamation from Tommy, and, opening my eyes, I saw Duck Sing, a large carving-knife between his teeth, wriggling down the companionway ladder on his belly. He quickly cut the ropes which bound us, his hands shaking so with fright that we were lucky to be relieved of our bonds without injury.

"Good boy, Duck Sing," said Tommy, in a low voice, as he rose to his feet. "How did you do it?"

"Me vely dam 'flaid," answered the trembling Chinaman. "Him say bimeby him hang me by pigtail, allee samee climinal heads me see one time Canton side. Me no likee an' me come catchee help, allee samme snake."

Tommy, with his hands freed, was once more himself, and immediately assumed the direction of affairs.

"Listen to me!" he said sharply. "We will lie on opposite sides of the cabin, our hands behind us, as if we were still tied, but we will each hold a belaying-pin. The one on whom he first turns his back will hit him on the head, and there must be no mistake about the blow, for it must knock him out. After that I expect that it will be a general rough house, but we must be as quiet as possible." He thrust the Chinaman in a corner near the companionway. "When we start to fight, you slide that door, Duck Sing. Hold it fast, and don't let any one in—do you understand?"

"Me savvy, allee lightee, but it moa betta me shut him now. Him stay topside, no can hurtee we."

"He'd shoot us like rats through the deadlights," said Tommy sharply. "You do what I tell you, or he will skin you alive after he has finished us."

The increased motion of the yacht warned us that we were in the open sea, and we had barely taken our positions, Tommy and I each holding a stout belaying-pin behind us, when Rounsival poked his head into the cabin.

He was apparently satisfied with what he saw, for he carelessly turned and gave Jackson the course before entering.

"Now, my brave buccaneers, I'll trouble you to tell me how you found my private storehouse," he said, grinning maliciously at us. "The niggers that dug the hole never told; that I'll swear to, and they were worth five hundred pieces of eight apiece. When Blackbeard pays that much to have a secret kept, he does not intend to have it leak out without some explanation."

To my surprise, Tommy answered him with a volley of curses, almost as bad as those which our captor habitually used. But Rounsival only laughed.

"Wait until I take a turn of this rope about your head and twist it a bit, my fine gentleman of fortune, and I'll make you sing a different tune," he said; and Tommy still cursed him.

I saw his object now; he wished to keep Rounsival's attention riveted upon himself, to give me a chance to down the man, but it needed all my will-power to make me play my part and prepare to strike unmercifully as Rounsival turned his back to me. I could not forget the easy good-nature of the Southerner, in whom we had roused the worst of passions solely to advance our own fortunes; but an appealing look from Tommy as the giant bent over to torture him reminded me that this was no time for sentimental regrets, and I hit him with all my strength.

He went down like a pole-axed ox, his great hands opening and closing convulsively as he sprawled on the floor, but almost before Duck Sing had slammed the door Tommy had wriggled out from under him and started to pinion his hands.

"Moa betta me cut him tloat," said Duck Sing, leaving his post and brandishing his knife, but Tommy ordered him off, and told me to disarm him.

"This darn boat's hoodoed," he said. "It will make murderers of us all if we don't leave it."

"Every ounce of that treasure has been paid for with a pound of blood, first and last," I said gloomily, as I listened to Rounsival's labored breathing, for it did not seem possible that he could survive the blow from which my fingers were still tingling. "I don't know that we'd be poorer in the end if we tossed it overboard."

"We'll discuss that later," replied Tommy, grinning. "If you will kindly help Duck Sing to keep that door, I'll try to reason with this delegate, and get control of his mind—if your blow hasn't knocked all the sense out of him."

The bound and unconscious man was as limp as a rag as we lifted him onto a locker, but Tommy immediately set to work on him in his own peculiar way; stroking his head and repeatedly ordering him to forever forget that he had played the part of Blackbeard, and to return to consciousness his own natural self. So far as I could see, his commands produced absolutely no effect, for Rounsival was unconscious, and made no sign.

"I don't know whether it will work or not," said Tommy doubtfully. "I'll take no chances, but with his hands tied we ought to be able to manage him, even if he awakes as Blackbeard—and tied his hands will remain until I hear his Southern drawl. Remains to clear the deck of that crew of hypnotic pirates, and to return this craft to the condition of a peaceful yacht. No nonsense, now, Duck Sing—if you harm Mr. Rounsival, I'll attend to skinning you myself."

The Chinaman grinned, for with his enemy bound he had regained confidence, and Tommy quietly slid back the companionway door.

It was just getting dusk, for there is no twilight in tropical waters, and Jackson was at the wheel; the sailors being engaged in making fast the anchor forward. As we came quietly from the cabin Jackson uttered an oath, and attempted to draw a pistol, but we sprang for him, and while Tommy made passes in front of his face, I relied on cruder methods, and caught him fair on the point of the jaw with my

fist. He went down and Tommy over him as the wheel spun round and the yacht fell off.

"Take that wheel before she rolls the sticks out again," shouted Tommy, as he rushed forward.

I could not see him in the darkness, but I heard him shouting to the sailors commands to fall asleep and forget, and from his voice I knew that he was putting every ounce of his will into it. He nodded confidently at me when he came aft again and kneeled beside Jackson, who was making an effort to get to his feet.

"Go to sleep, Jackson," I heard him say as he passed his hands over his eyes. "Sleep, sleep, sleep for five minutes and forget all that has passed. You are not a buccaneer—you are the sailing-master of the yacht *Mystic,* bound for New York, and when you awaken you will take charge of her."

"It's a queer course we are sailing for New York," I said, when Tommy rose to his feet, leaving Jackson peacefully asleep on the deck. He laughed when he glanced at the binnacle.

"She's pointed for Nassau now," he said, as he took the wheel, "but we'll put her on her proper course before the skipper comes to, for he will have enough to puzzle him."

He sang out his orders to the crew, and just as Jackson awoke and came unsteadily to the wheel, the *Mystic* heeled over to the breeze, her new bowsprit pointed for Sandy Hook.

"I can't understand it," Jackson muttered, looking up at the new rigging, which had been so well set up under the quondam Blackbeard's direction. "She was a dismasted hulk when I went to sleep, and now she's as taut and trim as ever."

"The niggers gave you a nasty knockout before they listened to reason and consented to refit us," said Tommy, lying unblushingly. "They put you and the whole crew to the bad, but you are coming around all right."

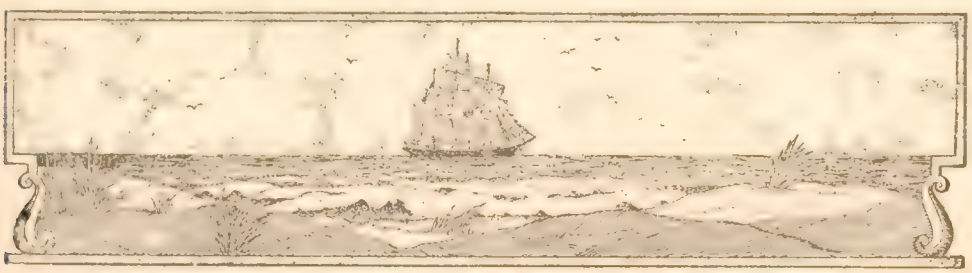
"It must have been a nasty one," answered Jackson, caressing his jaw tenderly. "My head is singing like an angry beehive yet, but I'm fit for duty, sir. Those niggers are better riggers than I gave 'em credit for, and I'd like to feel how she answers to her new rig."

Tommy willingly relinquished the wheel, and together we made our way over the plunging deck to the companionway.

"No more hypnotism for your uncle Thomas Williams," said Tommy positively. "If we get out of this scrape, I'm through with it forever, and—hello! What's that?" Unmistakable sounds of distress were coming from the companionway, and Tommy gave a joyful shout as he slapped me on the back.

"Richard is himself again!" he cried. "Blackbeard never made a noise like that, and if I'm not much mistaken, it's the peaceful Rounsival making his customary contributions to Neptune."

I gave a sigh of relief as Tommy quickly cut the rope which bound the Southerner's wrists, for he was returning to consciousness, and I knew that the lust for riches had not made me a murderer.



Norroy, Diplomatic Agent

By George Bronson-Howard

Author of "The Red Pope in the Yellow Palace," Etc.

V.—FOR THE GOOD OF THE STATE

(*A Complete Story*)

CHAPTER I.

IN THE SAXONIAN FOREIGN OFFICE.

AVE you ever heard of a man named Norroy—Yorke Norroy?"

The other man smiled. "My dear baron, have I not lived in Washington?"

"You consider that an answer?"

"Most people in Washington would."

"H'm!"

The older man appeared to be meditating, and tugged at his beard. He was short, squat, and corpulent, attired in a frock coat, which seemed too small for him, and a turnover collar, which squeaked when he moved his short, red neck. He was very hairy; his beard and mustache covered most of his face it seemed, leaving only his huge, hooked nose, beady, steellike eyes, and domelike forehead unhidden. His hair was very gray, as was his beard, but his huge mustache had been dyed a vivid black. Thus the Baron von Wittschaeft, chief of the Saxonian foreign office, the most unscrupulous, daring, and vigilant official in Saxonian employ, the man whose one thought was the ultimate supremacy of his own country; abettor of revolutions, maker of kings and princes, fomenter of trouble generally—the chief of all the diplomatic world and underworld of the Saxonian empire.

"H'm!" he said again.

His companion was less worthy of notice. It was his profession to attract none. He was clean-shaven, had keen eyes, a pallid complexion, somewhat pimply from use of cosmetics for disguises, and wore the conventional frock coat and gray trousers. On his knee he nursed with gloved hands a top-hat. He looked ever and anon toward his chief.

"Well," rumbled Wittschaeft presently, "what do you know of this Norroy—eh?"

The other looked up. "Surely the butterfly of fashion isn't mixed up in any diplomatic imbroglio?" he laughed. "Harmless, inconsequential Norroy!"

"What do you know of him, Ritter?" repeated his chief stolidly, but with a glance that was not to be gainsaid.

"Let's see." Ritter had realized by now that this was no aimless question. He began to think rapidly. "Norroy—well, baron, first of all, he sets the fashions in Washington, and tailors would rather follow his ideas than the King of England's; that's something. He's probably the best-dressed man in America."

Wittschaeft nodded. "Proceed."

"Well, then, he's most in demand to lead cotillions, and society women have a fashion of running after him for help in their social functions."

"Anything more?"

Von Ritter drummed on his hat.

This series began in the June issue. The back numbers can be obtained through any newsdealer. Price ten cents each.

"He's probably the best amateur actor in America. He has charge of the annual performance of the Mask and Buskin Club—one of the exclusive affairs in Washington that packs the National Theater for a week each year. He plays the leading parts and stages the plays. They tell me that the Theatrical Syndicate offered him fabulous sums to star professionally; but he doesn't take it seriously—only laughs, so they say."

"He must have money, then—or hold office?"

"Why, no!" Von Ritter wrinkled his eyebrows. "No one knows how he lives. He's supposed to have a trifling income, but not enough for his needs. Although—there's some sort of mystery about him. He disappears sometimes for six months at a time, and no one knows where he goes. And that's all I know about him, baron, except that he's probably thirty-three to thirty-eight years old—his is an indefinite age."

"H'm! A person of great social prominence, then?"

"Yes, baron."

"And you don't know why he disappears?"

"No, baron."

"Then you shall know. Yorke Norroy is a secret agent of the state department."

Von Ritter sprang to his feet. "Absurd—Norroy!"

"A secret agent—*the* secret agent—the man who has done more to undermine the power of Saxonia, to destroy her carefully laid schemes, to overturn her plans, than any man alive. He today is the worst enemy that our emperor"—he involuntarily saluted—"possesses."

Von Ritter was trying to smile. "It seems to be the sheerest nonsense to one who knows the man—a dandified, lackadaisical——"

"All of that. A man thoroughly unsuspected. The man who gave the Panama Canal to the United States, who brought about Ladenburg's death, who released De Legaspi, the Andevian, from Eagle's Eyrie when a woman had him safe, and thus killed our Andevian schemes. Not only that, but, very recently, the man who had Ehricke kicked out of the service, and put Dmitri on the throne of Lugaria; and whose last exploit has been the recall of Knobloch from Washington with a tarnished name." Wittschaeft struck the table heavily and arose. "There is your harmless, lackadaisical dandy for you! Harmless, indeed—*Herr Gott!* harmless!"

He laughed thunderously, but without mirth, and the veins in his short, fat neck swelled and became purplish.

Von Ritter sank into his chair, seemingly in a daze. "Norroy—Yorke Norroy—secret agent," he muttered. "Ehricke—Ladenburg—and——" He suddenly faced his chief. "Then, sir"—and his voice steadied—"according to what you have said, this man Norroy has practically achieved all of the diplomatic tricks which have left us floundering!"

The chief of the foreign office nodded heavily. "He is a very, very dangerous man—a snake—a snake who bites when one is least aware of his presence—a very dangerous enemy." He stared stonily at his subordinate. "Look you, Ritter, you are chief of the secret agents now, eh? You are the man most to be relied upon of all of them. So?"

"You are kind, baron," stammered Von Ritter.

"I am just. Your work has been well done. You deserve what you have received. True, there are several murders achieved by you which show an utter lack of belief in the value of human life."

A hand was held up protestingly. "Can you call it murder when it was done for the good of the state?"

A shrug of the heavy shoulders, and Wittschaeft bit off the end of a black cigar. "I know. You are unscrupulous—as unscrupulous as a secret agent must be. Personally, you would not do these things, I know. But it is for the emperor"—again both men involuntarily touched their foreheads—"and, therefore, good. Now——"

Wittschaeft waved the black cigar.

"Ladenburg was before you. This

Norroy tricked him to his death. Ehricke was his successor. Ehricke now lies buried in the sands of the Niger River, for he was unsuccessful in coping with Norroy, and was forced to sign a paper in which he betrayed his country. Then—the Doomsmen, as you know—and he is dead." Wittschaeft narrowed his eyes. "You have succeeded Ehricke, you, Leopold von Ritter."

"But I——" began the man.

"You are no better than Ehricke. You are not as good as Ladenburg—jewel of secret agents. Ah! Therefore it is well for you not to boast. We have no secret agent who is capable of coping with this Yorke Norroy. Today he knows the inside and outside of the Saxonian foreign service as well as do you; maybe better. He knows you have succeeded Ehricke, no doubt."

Von Ritter sprang to his feet. "You called him a snake."

"Yes?" The eyes narrowed again.

"Then why not scotch the snake—for the good of the state?" Von Ritter breathed a trifle heavily and stared across the table at his chief.

There was a silence, broken only by the scratching of a safety-match upon the box which Wittschaeft held. When it was ignited, the chief very slowly lighted the cigar, and blew out the flaming stick of wood. Puffing out a cloud of white smoke, he brushed it away, and stared back at Von Ritter.

"You comprehend, I see. Well, why not?"

Von Ritter sat down again. "You sent for me for that reason," he breathed, not taking his eyes from Wittschaeft's.

"Why not? It is desirable—for the good of the state. Have you the courage to cope with him?"

Von Ritter laughed. "Courage! And why should I not have? It is simply a question of assassination, so far as I can see it. But tell me, does Norroy suspect that he is known to us as a secret agent?"

"How should I know? If I know the man, he suspects everything. But this I will say—that until this month I knew nothing of his identity as a secret agent. When I learned, I paid high for the information."

"How did you discover?"

The beady eyes were turned upon the questioner again. "There are traitors everywhere. This was a former assistant secretary of state kicked out of office by the President for treachery; and afterward balked of his revenge through this same Norroy. It appears that he was to publish certain things in a newspaper; and Norroy choked it off through some devilish machination. The traitor lost the money to be paid him, and also his revenge. He then turned to us and sold his country and its secrets—but principally he told us of this same Norroy and some of the things he had done. From what he told, it was easy to discover the same Machiavellian hand in other matters, and——"

"So I am delegated to put Mr. Norroy out of the way," finished Von Ritter, without emotion.

"Yes—bearing always in mind that if you fail and are discovered, or succeed and are discovered, this country can do nothing to help you. You will hang as a common murderer, Ritter!"

"So be it, baron. I will take the chances. And my success?"

"Will mean a great deal to Leopold von Ritter. Have you a plan?"

Von Ritter placed his hat on the square desk and leaned over, his hands supporting his face.

"There are thugs everywhere," he said. "What easier than to bribe one? Norroy spends some time in New York. In New York there are allied gangs of criminals who feed upon dirty political work and carry out private grudges. The papers are full of them, at times; but so strong is their political hold that only the small fry are arrested. I know of many such gangs. There is one led by an Italian who calls himself by another name in order to appear Irish—for it is better to be Irish in New York than to be a noble over here. There is another called the Five Points Gang; still another the Mulberryites. These gangs are composed of the lowest and most hardened criminals."

"And you would ally yourself with such? You—*hochegeboren*, of a noble family—you!" Wittschaeft was studying him closely.

"I would do anything for the good of the state," replied Von Ritter simply. "Such thugs as these exist. Why, then, should I refrain from utilizing them? And more, baron, I realize that the death of Norroy alone is insufficient. It were an easy matter to shoot him or stab him in the back. He must reveal what he knows, on promise of his life."

Wittschaeft rubbed his hands and nodded approvingly. "Although," he said discouragingly, "I doubt very much that he will."

Von Ritter smiled. "Such thugs think nothing of torturing a man," he commented.

Wittschaeft rose. "Von Ritter," he said, "you are thoroughly unscrupulous. I believe you will succeed. If you do, remember that the position of assistant to me is still open, assistant chief of the foreign office. Succeed in getting rid of this man and obtaining information worth consideration and the position is yours."

Von Ritter was also on his feet. He collected his hat, gloves, and stick, and stood facing his chief.

"I will succeed, baron," he said, and held out his hand. But the Baron Wittschaeft did not seem to see it.

"I believe you will," he said absentmindedly.

CHAPTER II.

THE ROOST.

If there can be found any one who cares to explore out-of-the-way sections of New York City, let him start up Park Row from the Brooklyn Bridge and continue on his way until he reaches Chatham Square. Up to this point, our explorer is perfectly safe. If he cares to go much farther, it would be better for him to retrace his steps to the Oak Street police-station, and have an officer detailed to go with him. For when one turns off at this point he falls into a maze of winding streets, dirty, frowsy, unkempt.

It was round about this section that McGuirk's Suicide Hall once flourished, flourished on the blood of its victims, who, robbed of every penny they possessed, either by crooked cards, women, or thuggery, found their death in one of the stuffy, ill-kept rooms above the dive.

There were convenient doctors, paid for the purpose, to call these unfortunates suicides; and there were coroners, too, who knew their business and how to add thousands of dollars to their annual income. For McGuirk's was but one place; the most notorious, we grant, but still only one of those vile dens selling drugged drink and keeping on its payroll women and men for the making of the proprietors millionaires and rulers of New York politics.

Going farther, one comes to "The Old Hen," "The Dirty Feathers," and others with names more or less euphonious. Men jostle the explorer and peer into his face to see if the game is worth while. Jackies ashore—poor, silly jackies!—throng the streets. A sad sight those same jackies will be when morning comes, and they are roused from sleep by the kick of a policeman to find they have been sleeping in a gutter, that their six months' wages are gone, and that even the clothes on their backs have been changed for ill-smelling rags.

For the most part, the streets, except for the gaudy saloons, are very dark and quiet. The houses have not been altered particularly in exterior appearance since they were built, more than half a century before. They are old, shambling, and very badly kept. One passes row after row of them without a single light in the windows.

Every now and then the acrid smell of opium comes from an open hallway, for most of the denizens of this district woo the destroying drug. There are no children here to play in the streets, barrel organs come not, and the roar of the elevated trains in the distance and the occasional hoot of the river steamers and ferry-boats alone break the silence.

It was in one of the houses, semi-detached from the others, and not very far from the water-front, that three men sat, something like four months after Von Ritter had his interview with the chief of the foreign office.

One of the men was Von Ritter himself, although his appearance was so greatly changed that his chief would have been hard put to recognize him. His beard and mustache he had allowed to grow; and he was attired in a suit of rough brown serge, under which he wore a tight-fitting jersey of blue yarn, the collar serving for neck-dressing. His feet were stretched out at length, and he was smoking a pipe.

Across the boarded cellar, another man, with a lowering jaw and heavy, sunken eyes, was engaged in cooking a pill of opium, preparatory to smoking the same, while the third man, a wiry, slim youth, was reading a pink evening paper. The youth was handsome enough in a lower-class way, with bright, bold, black eyes, heavy-arched eyebrows, and a mass of curly hair, albeit somewhat greasy.

He alone had made any pretense at dressing, and was attired in clothes which, according to his ideas, were of the correct kind. In appearance he might have been taken for a book-maker or a prosperous young gambler. He was brushing cigarette ashes from a wonderful waistcoat containing all the colors of Joseph's coat.

"Time for them to show up," he made remark.

The other man looked up. "Dey'll be here, all right, all right," he said.

Von Ritter knocked the ashes from his pipe. "You don't think there's any chance of—failure?" he asked, somewhat nervously. He spoke English with just a slight foreign accent, not enough for any one to detect just what his nationality might be.

The man cooking the pill, having completed his task, turned on him. "Say, beau, dere ain't no chanst at all. You dunno wot you're talking about w'en you talk about failin'. Slick Sue's been at this here business too long, and Ed knows wot's wot. De mob has been after him ever since he left de Holland House and started for dat t'eater—and dey ain't no chanst a-losing. Dere's too much cush in de business for dem to bust, and, if dey do, dey know me—it's skiddoo and twenty-three for dem, all right, and dey ain't takin' no chanst."

Von Ritter shook his head slowly. "I don't know. I've got a premonition that it's a difficult task to do anything with that man."

"Talk Amurrican," advised the curly-headed young man.

Von Ritter turned on him angrily. "You'll do well to let my speech alone. I didn't hire you to teach me the language. I hired you to do the dirty work, and I'm tired of your interference. Now——"

"Aw! cut it out, beau; can't you take a joke?" inquired the curly-headed young man, stroking the curls.

The Saxonian relapsed into a gloomy silence. To be quite fair to him, he was not particularly enamored of his task, now that the crucial point had come. He was a man of birth and some position; and to feel that he was ranked as one of themselves by these scoundrels was something that gave him immeasurable distaste for himself.

For three months he had been plotting and scheming and waiting for Norroy to appear in New York. A day before, news came to him that Norroy had left Washington, and was in New York to consult an eye-specialist. The specialist was out of town when Norroy arrived; and the secret agent had put up at the Holland House and was waiting for his return. The machinery which Von Ritter had been preparing was now set in motion; and the plot to bring Norroy a prisoner to "The Roost," as this place was called, began its workings.

He looked around the unclean cellar-room, with its boarded floor. There was only one means of ingress, egress, or ventilation, and that was a heavy oaken door, strengthened by iron bars. It was plain there was little chance for a prisoner to make his escape. He sighed, sniffed at the acrid odor of the opium, and filled his pipe slowly.

He was telling himself that he had fallen low indeed.

CHAPTER III.

THE BAIT FOR A BIG FISH.

Yorke Norroy had not found that he cared to acquaint New York society with the fact that he was in town. He was not a particularly well man; and his eyes had been giving him considerable trouble. His object in coming to New York was to have an expert opinion pronounced, a treatment prescribed, and then return to Washington as soon as practicable.

He was engaged in the very important work of staging the play for the Mask and Buskin Club, and his thoughts were on that task alone; for, truth to tell, Norroy was obsessed with the idea that in this particular play he had struck a gold-mine. Heretofore, the plays presented by the Mask and Buskin Club had been selected from the popular successes of past seasons; but this was an original effort, and one which promised to make a very good play indeed.

The need of money was ever present with Yorke Norroy; and his health had not been good for some little while. He was reflecting bitterly that all the work he had done for the state department was work that had no cumulative effect; work that was ever secret, and for which he could get no public praise or thanks, or anything of material good except the money which kept him going. And even the money only sufficed for his bare needs. He could hope for no pension or honor from a grateful government, nothing to sustain him when old age appeared.

Norroy was well past his thirty-fifth birthday; and he had no more now than he had possessed when he went into the state department, some fourteen years before. He was the dean of his profession, feared by kings and emperors and presidents, and he had done much to make the history of his day; but for himself he had done nothing except acquire a reputation for waistcoats and amateur acting.

But this play! If it were successful at its première before the fashionables of Washington, the Theatrical Syndicate would be glad enough to take it up; and a successful play meant a competence. He could not consider their offer to be an actor himself, for a man who had juggled with the map of Europe hardly felt that the task of the painted mime was one befitting the little dignity of mind he had acquired. Besides, he felt it would be trading shamelessly upon his social reputation; and of that he was not a little careful.

When he registered at the Holland House he bade the clerk tell any one who called that he was out; and most especially the newspaper men. But one of these ran him to earth in the grill-room, and Norroy, knowing it unwise to antagonize the press, had invited him to share his meal. The reporter had dined; but he drank some of Norroy's very excellent burgundy, and listened eagerly for replies to his questions.

When he had taken himself off, Norroy left the hotel and made his way to the Garden Theater, where a new play was being put on—one on the order of his own, and which he had some desire to see.

Before leaving the hotel he had soothed his eyes with a few drops of belladonna taken from the small, square vial which he carried in his waistcoat pocket; and once, during the progress of the play, he found it advisable to do so again. He knew the stuff was not the best thing for his eyes; but it gave temporary relief, and he used it.

The curtain down on the last act, he got himself leisurely to the cloak-room, obtained his inverness and top-hat, and, drawing on a pair of white woolen gloves over his kid ones, sought the street.

On the corner he paused. He was not sleepy and his head ached a trifle. He decided to walk down the avenue as far as Gramercy Park; and maybe stop in at the Players' Club, of which he was a member.

He started down the avenue at a brisk pace, and had soon turned off and into Gramercy Park, and dived

into the basement entrance of the Players'. Had he looked behind him, he might have seen that two people, who had been following him since he left the hotel early in the evening, came to an abrupt stop by the railings of the park; but Norroy's ideas were not on plots at that particular time, and he was not thinking of the diplomatic service and its dangers.

He had hardly rung for a drink before he found himself clasping hands with a well-known actor-manager, a leading man, a magazine editor, and a star. Such being the case, Norroy drank three Scotches instead of one; and talked shop with his fellow clubmen. As he finally arose to go, the actor-manager put a hand on his arm.

"Been hearing lots about that play of yours, Norroy," he said. "They tell me it's a hummer. Don't forget your friends when you hawk it about—if you do!"

"Thanks; you'll have first peep," laughed Norroy, somewhat elated, for of all the actors he knew, this man he liked best. He got himself out on the street, feeling considerably cheered and with the headache gone. He struck out toward Broadway.

He had hardly taken eight strides away from the club door before the sounds of people running came to his ears. Then a woman flashed by him, panting; and after her a man with arm outstretched. The chase continued hardly a minute before the woman stumbled; the man reached her, dragged her to her feet, and struck her heavily.

"Don't, Ed," she besought.

Norroy quickened his pace. In the abstract, he had considerable respect for women; and did not care for brutality. The man struck the woman once more.

"Here!" said Norroy quietly. "If you don't leave that girl alone I'll call a policeman, you big brute!"

The man released the girl and faced Norroy. He was good-looking in the fashion of his class; but his teeth were yellow and dirty and his eyes bloodshot. "What t'ell 've youse got to do with it? I'll give you a swift punch in the jaw, see? Beat it, you Charley-boy!"

He caught at the girl. Norroy's prehensile fingers, as flexible and as merciless as steel, caught at his wrists and tore him away. The man gave a low growl and doubled his fists.

"Don't hurt him, Ed," wailed the girl.

Norroy laughed a very cold, hard, cruel laugh. The man came swinging toward him. Norroy stepped aside, struck up his guard, and delivered a smashing blow on the cheek-bone that sent the man twirling around. As his back showed, Norroy kicked him with all his force and sent him flat on his face in the street.

The man started to his feet, and his hand went to his hip pocket; but as Norroy advanced, the man, with a snarl, turned and ran off down the street. He disappeared around the corner of Irving Place.

"Now, my girl," said Norroy, turning to the witness of the combat, "you'd better be going home. What do you want to mix up with that sort of man for, anyhow, I'd like to know?"

He put his hands on her shoulders and swung her into the lamplight. She was a pretty woman and very neatly and quietly dressed with that peculiar taste that comes to the womankind of Manhattan, high and low.

"You go home and keep away from that sort of man," he repeated. "Good night." With his customary courtesy, he doffed his hat and started down the street. The woman turned, took a few quick steps, and caught his arm.

"Oh, Mr.——"

"Mr. Brown," replied Norroy. "Well, what?"

"You've been very good to me," she stammered, "and I—I—know I haven't got any call on you; but—if you wouldn't mind seeing me home."

"I'm sorry——" began Norroy.

"I haven't got a right to expose you to danger."

At the word, Norroy looked at her sharply. "Danger?"

"Ed!" she explained. "He'll catch me and beat the life out of me. If you're with me, maybe he won't—though maybe he'll get some of his gang to beat you up. He belongs to a terri-

ble rough gang, Ed does. Of course I haven't got a right to ask you to run any risks."

"Oh, pshaw!" said Norroy. The hint, slight as it was, that he might be afraid of the bully or any like him nettled Norroy considerably, after the fashion of men of his kind who, accustomed as they are to risking their lives, yet shrink from the implication that they may be afraid.

The woman had worked skilfully on the vanity of the male animal; which, though not greatly developed in Norroy, still remained a vulnerable point where women were concerned. That he, Yorke Norroy, should by any possibility be frightened by what a man of Ed's type might compass! He could handle two such with his hands; if more than that, there was his sword-stick, which he always carried.

"I wouldn't like to see you hurt. You've been so good to me," continued the girl. "I'm so much obliged, Mr. Brown. Good night."

"Hold on," said Norroy bruskly. "I'll go with you. Where is it—eh?"

"One hundred and sixteen Van Brunt Street," she told him.

Now, in all New York there is no such street; but had the girl mentioned the Cherry Hill neighborhood, Norroy would doubtless have reconsidered his decision to go, knowing that the case of a woman living in that section was hopeless. Norroy knew nothing of it from personal observation, but he had read considerable concerning it in the daily papers; and especially in the last year, since Monk Judson and his gang of Cherry Hillers had flamed out into notoriety as defiers of the law.

"Where's that?" asked Norroy, lighting one of his ever-present gold-crested cigarettes.

"It's over on the East Side, near the river. We live in an old house, and mother won't leave it. It's not a very nice neighborhood." After a moment's hesitation, she added: "Ed lives there. You don't mind, do you—going?"

"Not at all," he assured her; although the scrutiny of the passengers when they boarded a Madison Avenue car going southward did not please him greatly. It was so plainly evident that the man, in his smartly cut coat and latest block of topper, was of a different sort from the girl that even a dirty little urchin stared.

Norroy kept up a desultory conversation with the woman about things in general, talking most of the time himself in his aimless, attractive, small-talk manner in which, after years of experience, he could converse for hours without the slightest tax on his brain; and even while thinking of other things.

His companion suddenly reminded him by touching his arm and signaling the conductor. They got off; and Norroy followed the girl eastward and crossed the Bowery, with its vulgar, staring crowds, brazen loudness, and multicolored lights.

"You live near here?" asked Norroy curiously.

He was beginning to feel sorry that he had come; and wondered cynically if, after all, the woman was not of a class so very large in its numbers as to lack interest individually. But Norroy had pledged his word to see her home. So he continued on his way with her.

Speculative men and women surveyed him as he passed; but the sight of the girl with him gave them the warning "hands off," and they went sulkily about their business, wondering at the luck that threw a "real swell" into such strange places as these.

By this time they were in the dark streets, and Norroy was more than suspecting. He felt cautiously for his watch, and slid it out of his watch-pocket into the inner one of his dress-coat; his trousers lacking side pockets, his money was already there. Still with stealthiness, he slipped his hand into the rear pocket and pushed his jeweled cigarette-case in with the money and watch. Then, taking a firmer grip on his sword-stick, he continued, watching acutely, his eyes apprehensive.

The girl had halted. "I live here," she said. "Won't you come in and meet my mother? She'll be so grateful to you."

"Sorry," said Norroy. "I've an engagement up-town at one o'clock—that's my time for retiring, you see, and my engagement is with my bed. So—good night."

He turned his back, lifted his hat, and took a step forward. Immediately he was pinioned from behind by two very muscular arms.

"Oh, I guess you'll stay and meet mother," some one jeered at him, in a high falsetto; and almost instinctively he knew the tones for those of the formerly vanquished "Ed."

He made a movement to free himself, but was sent flying headlong forward. He fell on his hands and knees on the area steps, and down to the level with the basement; his stick was wrenched from him; another shove, and the door was opened from the inside. Norroy fell in, a sprawling heap. Three pairs of hands clutched at him, and rapidly took an inventory of his person.

"Just to see if he's got a weapon," some one called from behind. "He's not to be robbed. Mind you, he's not to be robbed."

The hands released him for a moment. "Well, he ain't got no weapon," said some one sulkily, and gave Norroy another push.

The secret agent pitched forward and caught at the lintel of another door. Hands assisted him within. Dazed and dizzy, he dashed at his enemies in the darkness, but was hurled back; and the second door opened. Here he was roughly shoved again; and found himself in the circle of light thrown by a kerosene lamp on a rough table. The place smelled of opium.

Norroy, seeing a chair, sat down and collected his scattered wits. The room being somewhat oppressive, he removed his overcoat and brushed himself into neatness; then he looked at the three men, one of them seated, two standing behind his chair, and inquired very pleasantly:

"Now, is there anything I can do for you?"

He found his cigarette-case and lighted a cigarette, casting a look of gentle questioning upon his assailants.

CHAPTER IV.

NORROY'S WAY.

No one answered him immediately; then the young man with the loud waistcoat came from behind the chair and stared at the secret agent.

"Say, you got a nerve," he remarked; and his eyes surveyed the well-cut evening coat and the waistcoat with the long points. "He's a swell, all right, all right," he continued, turning to the sullen man, who had laid aside his opium-pipe and was now also facing Norroy.

"I'd like to know," continued Norroy, "what I can do for you. I have an engagement at one o'clock—that's my time for going to bed," he explained politely.

The young man with the waistcoat guffawed loudly. "Well, I guess you won't shut your peepers at one to-night," he said. "Go on, beau, and tell him what's what." He looked toward Von Ritter, who had been quite silent.

Von Ritter cleared his throat and mastered his indecision. "Monsieur," he said, in French, "I am responsible for your being in this place. I have certain reasons——"

The realization of his real peril came to Norroy. Up to now he had merely imagined that he was a victim of assault for the purpose of robbery or blackmail; but Von Ritter's accent gave him the clue to the position as it really was.

"Speak German, monsieur," he advised Von Ritter. "It is more natural to you."

He spoke calmly, watching the Saxonian. Von Ritter's French was almost flawless; but Norroy was too good a linguist not to catch the subtle Teutonic twang.

Von Ritter fingered his pipe. "You are entirely in my hands, Mr. Norroy," he said, this time in English.

Norroy looked around the room. It was without windows, and had but one means of egress—the door, which was strengthened with iron bars across it. Besides, the three men were between him and the door. The man with the

loud waistcoat held a revolver lightly between thumb and forefinger; and behind the sullen man a stiletto was stuck into the wall. Von Ritter, too, kept one hand in his pocket constantly.

It was manifestly impossible that Norroy should escape; they had even removed the lamp beyond his reach. He had only to make an aggressive motion, and the three would be upon him. He shrugged his shoulders.

"Well, Mr. Saxonia," he returned, in English, "I acknowledge the fact. I am entirely in your hands. What, then?"

"Do you recognize him?" asked Von Ritter, twirling his pipe toward the sullen man.

Norroy shook his head.

"I believe he is known to a certain portion of the public as Monk Judson. Is that not correct, Mr. Judson?"

The sullen man looked up—an evil, hairy brute, with little, piglike eyes, full of animal cunning, and a long underlip. He was hideously ugly, and one had not far to surmise as to the reason of the "Monk."

"Sure, I'm Judson," he said, with an air of regal finality.

"I am honored," remarked Norroy. "I have met scoundrels, thieves, and murderers in my time, but never so shining an example as Mr. Judson."

Judson was on his feet. "Say, whatcher givin' me, huh? None of your funny business, or——"

Von Ritter waved his hands. "Don't quarrel, Mr. Judson," he begged. "Now, Mr. Norroy, the time is very short. You recognize your position. You know that I hold the balance of power. You must realize that you cannot escape. Now, I want certain information. If you choose to give it to me and sign a paper acknowledging that you have given this information, I will let you go free. For that will result in clipping your wings, so far as the diplomatic service is concerned." He had reverted to German this time. "My object is to get this information and keep you out of the service. Now, I wish to know the inside of the United States' agreements with the league of South American republics, and— —"

The cigarette-case was waved gently. "Absurd, my dear Saxonian," said Norroy. "Absolutely absurd." He took out another cigarette, proffering his case to Von Ritter, who refused. Norroy passed the case to the man with the loud waistcoat, who accepted.

"Absurd?" Von Ritter flushed. "How absurd?"

Norroy lighted the cigarette and smiled gently. "Absurd for the simple reason that I am an American of the better sort, and my kind find other uses for their country's secrets than betraying them. The thing is preposterous on the face of it. Really, my dear Saxonian, I must decline."

"There are ways," hinted Von Ritter darkly.

"For instance?"

"Well"—it was plain Von Ritter did not relish the disadvantage to which Norroy's attitude put him—"I have been told that in extreme cases our friend Mr. Judson has been in the habit of heating a poker and applying it to the skin. Sometimes to the eyes —"

Norroy blew a cloud of smoke. "That must be very painful," he said; "very painful!"

"Well?" queried Von Ritter, with patience.

Norroy surveyed the room again. If the worst came, he had no intention of submitting to any branding from the hands of amateurs. He could make a dash for the stiletto that stuck in the wall. With that, perhaps, he might be able to do something. At all events, they should not give him a taste of the hot iron.

Norroy was averse to physical pain, shrank from it as all highly nervous persons do. He was not quite sure what he should do if put under torture; and he had no intention of giving the weaker part of his nature a chance to assert itself. Death he did not particularly fear. And this time it looked as though he had played his last card in the game of diplomacy, and that the game would soon be over.

"I refuse," said Norroy finally. "I

refuse to give you any information whatsoever—any information whatsoever. Now, that's all."

Von Ritter was shaken with wrath. "You fool, don't you know when you're beaten? Why, there's three of us here to one of you! You haven't got a weapon. You were searched, and you didn't have one. If we choose to brand you, two of us are strong enough to hold you while the other does the work. Can't you see you're beaten? Give in, Mr. Norroy; I am no Inquisitor. I do not desire to put you to the test."

"I refuse," replied Norroy again.

The Saxonian, who had risen, sank back in his chair with a hopeless air. "What kind of a man are you?" he demanded. "Have you no sense of proportion? You've beaten other men at just such games as these, and they've given in. But you—— -"

A curious smile played about Norroy's face. "There was an English writer who has a poem called 'The American.' I think he says:

"Enslaved, illogical, elate,
He greets the embarrassed gods, nor fears
To grasp the iron hand of Fate,
Or match with Destiny for beers!"

He finished the quotation, still with his curious smile. "I hardly realized before how true that was, or how much of an American I am myself. And so, I'm matching with Destiny, my friend of Saxonia. We're both of us matching with Destiny, and—let the best man win!"

The Saxonian turned out his palms with a hopeless gesture. "What chance have you to match with Destiny when I hold all the cards? It is not one man against one man. In that case, I fear I should be in a very evil strait, indeed, Mr. Norroy. You must realize that I have a mission to perform, and that mission is to clip your wings—to render you helpless to harm my country again. I shall take any means I deem necessary. And I hold the cards."

"What if I should hold a card of which you know nothing, my friend of Saxonia?" asked Norroy.

Von Ritter grew impatient. "Enough of that. You are helpless, and you know it. You hold no card at all. You are euchred completely. Come, be sensible. It is only a question of signing a paper."

"A question that will not be answered," rejoined Norroy.

The other took out his watch. "I will give you two minutes for your decision, Mr. Norroy," he said quietly.

Norroy lighted another cigarette; as he did so, he realized that this was probably the last cigarette he would ever smoke. He speculated idly as to whether he would be able to finish it before the two minutes were up. His eyes roamed about the room. The loud-waistcoated young man was swinging his revolver around his finger on the trigger-guard; Monk Judson, scowling furtively, was talking to him in the queer argot of the district.

To face death was no new thing for Yorke Norroy. For the past ten years he had been taking great risks. He had been within an inch of eternity many times; but he had always the fighting chance. Here, it seemed, he had no outlook whatsoever. They were three against one; three armed men against one unarmed one. It simply meant sure death, that was all.

Death! He was not quite ready to go. There was that play of his that he had yet to put on the boards. There were some good friends who were likely to miss him, and some women who would weep for him. Adelaide Hardesty, for instance, for whom he wished he had cared; and rattle-brained little Mona Larrabee, for whom he had a sort of big-brotherly affection; and the dream-woman, whom he had never met, the woman for whom he was going to care some day. The last was, perhaps, the hardest—that he should go out of the world without meeting this dream-woman, without having once met a woman for whom he truly cared.

His eyes were beginning to smart him horribly. He put his fingers into his waistcoat pocket to take out the bottle of belladonna; but smiled grimly when he reflected that he would soon experience a surer cure for smarting

eyes. And just at that moment the great inspiration came.

Belladonna!

He remembered the physician's instructions: "I don't advise the use of the stuff. If you get too much of it in your eyes, you'll be blinded for two or three days, totally blinded, and your eyes will feel as though they had been burned out."

Belladonna!

"The two minutes are up, Mr. Norroy." And Von Ritter shut his watch with a snap. "Come—your decision!"

Some little art, parlor legerdemain, of palming articles was useful at this juncture. The little vial of belladonna was in the palm of Norroy's hand, and they did not know it. The cork was unloosened, ready to be dislodged at the slightest movement.

"I refuse," said Norroy again.

"For the last time, I will ask you: Will you sign the paper after writing out a confession? You have no chance."

Norroy smiled grimly. "I have my trump-card, my friend," he said impassively.

The Saxonian laughed. "Bah! we shall see. Mr. Judson, will you heat that poker? Mr. Keegan, keep that man covered." Judson rose to his feet, and Keegan twirled the revolver in Norroy's direction.

The Saxonian wheeled upon Norroy. "Now, use your card, whatever it is."

Norroy's hand shot out quickly three times, each a quick jerk and a draw back. The Saxonian, with a cry, staggered back, his hands to his eyes, Keegan's revolver dropped to the floor, and he gave a queer, sobbing sound. Judson, the animal, put his hands to his eyes, wonderingly, stolidly.

"My trump-card!" said Norroy evenly; and he leaped upon the table. With a quick jerk, he pushed Judson toward Von Ritter; the two men fell, each into the grip of the other. Blinded as they were by the belladonna, their eyes burning with pain, they gripped in the clutch of primeval hate, each imagining the other to be the enemy. Judson's fingers closed about Von Ritter's throat. The Saxonian grabbed wildly for a weapon.

Keegan, meanwhile, on hands and knees on the floor, was fumbling about for his revolver. His hands fastened upon it; and Norroy saw a new danger. He dropped lightly from the table and his fingers grasped the iron poker. He brought it down heavily on the head of the loud-waistcoated man.

Keegan, without noise, collapsed on the floor; and Norroy tore the revolver from his nerveless hands and shoved it into his hip pocket.

There was a loud crash, and the two men, Von Ritter beneath and Judson on top, came down in a heap on the floor—rolling, twisting, and struggling.

Yorke Norroy eyed the struggling men for a moment or two; then shrugged his shoulders and slipped on his overcoat. Holding the revolver in one hand, he unlocked the door stealthily, and stumbled out into the passageway.

He passed through some sort of coal-bin and wood-shed, and pushed open another door. A faint gleam of moonlight showed him the door to the areaway. He shot back the bolt without noise, let down the chain, and tiptoed up the steps to the street.

He passed down the street hurriedly, his hand upon his revolver. Some people spoke to him once or twice, but there was something about this hurrying, bareheaded man which did not encourage the nighthawks abroad. He turned down one street into another, and boarded an electric car running north along the Bowery.

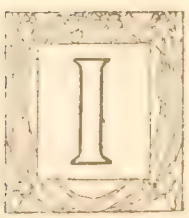
As he sat down on one of the outside seats, he drew in a deep breath and looked at his watch. "Half-past twelve," he said. "Just about time for me to get home and to bed. Don't like to be up after one o'clock."

And before one o'clock had struck he was back at the Holland House.

The Little White Box

By Martin A. Flavin

It was due, in the first instance, to dabbling in the delicate art of astrology. If it hadn't been for that, the white box might never have become famous; but the stars came into the scheme of things and made Mr. Flavin's humorous story possible



HAVE the most profound contempt for people who believe in fate—who assert that this thing and that were foreordained and couldn't be helped, and who mount failure on a little gilded pedestal of gross conceit and label it—"fate." I never saw a successful fatalist, or, rather, a fatalist who was successful at anything more useful than fatalism. Further, I never saw one that wasn't lazy, and I firmly believe that to be part of the creed.

I feel it incumbent on me to preface the series of misfortunes which I am about to relate with this explanation because I fear to be classed with that odious coterie.

I am not a fatalist, emphatically, and neither is Jimmy. There may have been—to be frank, there were—times when we wavered in the balance; when fact upon fact loomed up before our desperate eyes and seemed to thunder forth in terrifying accents: "Fate! fate!" But we did not succumb. No! a thousand times, no! Figuratively speaking, we lashed ourselves to the mast of our philosophical ship, and determined to float to safety or sink into the depths with it.

The fact that Jimmy and I went out for a stroll on Friday evening, that we wended our way down Broadway to Twenty-sixth Street, and up that street, that we hesitated before a large, radiant, plate-glass window and gazed within—I say this fact in itself contains no element of the supernatural. It was not weird, not even mysterious. We were in the habit of doing things like that.

This window was decorated with lithographs of Sarah Bernhardt, Jim Jeffries, and a score of like iridescent celebrities.

Also, there was a large gilt sign announcing to the prospective victim that Madame something or other—the only true and original Madame—had fixed things up with the stars for a brief period during which time she would astrologize—if such a term is possible—the past, present, and future, for the ridiculous sum of one dollar per head, etc., etc.

"Billy," said Jimmy, "let's go in."

Now, I am willing to admit that I should have refused to even lend my ears to such a preposterous proposition. Being older than Jimmy and more experienced, it was my duty to refuse. But I expect to lose Jimmy in a month or so—you see, he is going to be married, and even at this early date he is frequently quite irrational. Under the circumstances, I thought it best to humor him, so we went in.

The female wizard was fat and greasy and garlicky, but what she didn't know about the stars, the stars themselves didn't know. I pleaded with her not to divulge my future, because it would take away all the pleasure of the unexpected; and explained that there was no use raking up the past, because I knew all about it, and was doing my best to forget.

But I might as well have shrieked my protests to the four winds of heaven.

She gave me a course in mental jujutsu that left my moral courage a battered wreck; then she started!

She told me how old I was, within a few years; and that I ought to have studied for the ministry, and why I hadn't married—as if I didn't know!—and a whole lot of other things equally tiresome.

In conclusion, she informed me that I was soon to be engaged in a very precarious undertaking through the agency of a dear friend, and that this might leave me crippled for life.

I tried to find out just when this was scheduled to come off, and whether I was to be physically or financially crippled; but the information bureau ran out of dope, and I couldn't even ascertain the color of the friend's hair.

The sorceress thought that if she could cast my horoscope some of those little details might settle in the pan of destiny; but she wouldn't promise it—so I let it go at that.

Then she started in on Jimmy, and had the stars working overtime in two minutes. She skipped over his childhood pretty rapidly. I notice they nearly all do that. But when she got down to date, she did herself proud.

She said that he was in love with a blond girl—Grace is a brunette, but Jimmy was so tickled he never noticed the slip—and that the girl was crazy about him—which is quite true, and that he should have been an actor—which is Jimmy's weak spot—and that he had an artistic temperament, and an esthetic nature, and a sweet disposition, and all kinds of luck—but— -

Here there was an ominous pause, and the wizardess became very gloomy. In a voice of great emotion she exclaimed:

"You are contemplating a long journey!" She did this with a rising inflection which commanded a reply.

Jimmy said "Yes," rather doubtfully. The sorceress inspired doubt in any kind of intentions.

I knew that he was going down to Mrs. Tom Jethro's, at Narragansett the next day for a week-end, because Grace was visiting there, and he always went. But for the life of me I couldn't see how he had construed that into a long journey. However, it wasn't any of my business, so I kept out.

"Young man," continued the mystic, in a tone of great pain, "I regret to state that you will not go."

"Not go!" said Jimmy weakly "Why, my fiancée is there, and I've *got* to go."

"It is unfortunate," went on the sorceress, "but fate ordains otherwise."

"I know," said Jimmy pleadingly, "but, my good woman, you don't understand. It's absolutely essential to my future happiness that I go. Anyway, what's to prevent it?"

Well, we couldn't find out what was to prevent it beyond the fact that the stars were set, and it was all predetermined and no fault of hers. Adamant was not harder than that woman's heart.

This fairly drove Jimmy wild. Of course, if he had been in a normal state of mind, he wouldn't have noticed it at all. But being engaged had warped his imagination until he was susceptible to anything.

The result was that he insisted on arguing the matter with the prophetess for three-quarters of an hour.

Finally, in desperation, I offered her another dollar to hold a little quiet confab with fate and patch things up with the stars. That made her mad—so we went.

When we got outside I attempted to demonstrate to Jimmy by a series of undeniable facts, based largely on personal experience, that the prophetess was only a wretched, toothless old fake, and had no more to do with forecasting the future than an Arapaho Indian has to do with politics.

I glibly pointed out minor errors in the Madame's prognostications, such as my age and the blond girl, but without avail.

Jimmy was very much depressed. He quoted sorrowfully: "Coming events cast their shadows before," and decided that, as death was the only thing that could keep him from Grace, his days were numbered.

When we reached the club, he insisted on pulling old man Channing out of a poker-game to fix up his last will and testament, in which he bequeathed his entire fortune to an orphan asylum excepting only his horses and personal effects; these he very graciously bestowed on me.

Then he went into the writing-room and indited about a hundred pages of closely written club paper to Grace. He read it to me afterward, and I wept. It was the most ghastly piece of literature I ever indulged in, and quite enough to send the average young lady into violent hysterics or even worse.

It was replete with such expressions as: "Beloved, the stars have judged me, and all is over!" "The cruel hand of fate has torn us apart; I have been weighed in the balance and found wanting"—as if he were a ton of winter coal—"the flame of my life flickers—we shall never meet again. Farewell!"

He wound up with a pathetic apostrophe to Destiny which was positively awful. The whole thing was weird, mysterious, chaotic. Of course it had to be so, because Jimmy knew only what the female prophet had told him—and that was hardly what might be called clear.

Well, Jimmy was so tickled with the letter that for a minute he forgot that he had written his own death-sentence. However, it came back all of a sudden, and I was dolefully commanded to place it in a post-box with my own hands, and to attend to a few last rites and ceremonies, such as looking after Judge, his Boston terrier, and procuring a coffin with brass trimmings for himself.

I consented cheerfully, and tried to inveigle him into a game of billiards, but it was no go. Jimmy said that a man's last hours ought to be spent in prayer and meditation, and not in frivolous amusement.

However, he affirmed that he didn't intend to be a weakling. He meant to stick right to the finish and land on fate good and hard whenever he got a chance. In the meantime, I was to keep an eye on the stars, and to notify him at once if I saw them doing anything out of the ordinary.

With this final admonition, he departed, leaving me in a state of partial collapse.

While I was pondering upon the frailties of human nature, Lester Maxwell turned up and showed an inclination to be sociable. Knowing that he was an old friend of Jimmy's, I decided to ask his advice, and with that end in view made a clean breast of the whole thing.

Alas! horror upon horror! Maxwell was a fatalist. When I had concluded my story he nodded his head dubiously and said it was too bad—too bad!

"Why, Great Scott, man!" I cried, "you don't mean to say that you believe this rot?"

"Billy," said Maxwell solemnly, "rail not at fate. The stars have spoken; it is enough. But he is so young, so happy, so promising—too bad, too bad! Tell him good-by for me, Billy." With this encouraging finale, he went away.

I consumed some refreshment, and thought seriously of repairing to the Madame's and forcing her, at the point of a gun, to give me a written guarantee that the stars had slipped. But it was very late and very chilly, so I finally compromised with my conscience by going to bed. But not to sleep—oh, no! That beastly prophecy kept rolling about in my head, and would not out.

"Crippled for life!" The more I thought about it the more uncomfortable I became. Then I thought of Jimmy and Lester. There was some excuse for Jimmy, but Lester was generally considered to be a pretty level-headed fellow, and he, in addition, was not tangled up with a bonnet. If he was willing to swallow such a cock-and-bull story—why, there must be something in it.

I wondered what Channing would say about it, and thought some of knocking him up to find out. How many, many times within the next few hours did I wish I had! Channing is not a fatalist. I didn't know it then, but I do now. Finally, I drifted off into a set of wild dreams.

At daybreak I woke up with a head like a balloon and a dismal, empty feeling in the pit of my stomach which was not caused by hunger.. By seven I had dressed and wandered down to the bar, not intending to drown my sorrows, but just merely to soak them. And there I found Jimmy—Jimmy who had not been known to rise before nine o'clock in ages.

There he was with an expression like an embarrassed undertaker, drinking brandy-and-soda before breakfast and writing farewell messages on his cuffs.

He greeted me tragically, and inquired whether I had posted the letter. I lied brilliantly. Then I tried to talk about the weather, but it proved a dry subject. In short, we got switched onto the sorceress before you could say "Jack Robinson."

Jimmy said that the train for Narragansett left at three, and wondered whether he hadn't better shut himself up in his room till time to go, thus avoiding possible accidents. I tried to say "Nonsense!" but it stuck in my throat, and all I could think of was: "The stars have spoken—it is enough."

That wasn't encouraging, so I kept my mouth shut. Jimmy seemed to have exhausted his conversational abilities, and the silence got so thick you could feel it.

"Jimmy," said I finally, when I had stood it as long as I could, "you don't really believe that anything is going to happen, do you?"

"Billy," said he, "I don't think anything about it—I know it."

Now, what kind of an argument could a man use with a proposition like that? I began to get nervous again. There isn't anything as convincing as unwavering obstinacy. Of course it was kind of up to me to sympathize with Jimmy, but, according to the sorceress, I was due for a pretty heavy fall myself; a fact which didn't seem to impress Jimmy at all.

I reminded him of it, and, strange to relate, it seemed to cheer him up marvelously. In fact, he waxed quite vivacious and drew a very eloquent picture of me being wheeled around in an invalid's chair. He seemed to think that I ought to be very grateful to the stars for noticing me at all.

Finally he became reminiscent, and dragged me back to college days, and we discussed the old times at considerable length until we got to our "third prom," when I thoughtlessly mentioned that that was the first time he ever saw Grace. Then his mind went back to the morgue, and he became positively gruesome.

About eight o'clock he suddenly decided that he would like to take a walk. It was my breakfast time, and, anyway, I had about made up my mind to spend the day indoors, where I was assured of good medical service; but Jimmy was so very insistent and so very much hurt at my lack of enthusiasm in obeying what he termed a death-bed request, that I went.

We started out badly. You see, Jimmy was quite sure that his demise would be caused by some one dropping a building-stone on his head, so he wanted to walk in the middle of the street. Fancy any one walking down the middle of Broadway at nine o'clock in the morning! At last we compromised on the curbstone, but it was hard work. Every time a street-car passed he shuddered, and the rattling of the drays almost drove him crazy.

But crossing the streets—that was the limit. I was so worked up myself that every automobile which came within range looked to me like the avenging angel, and a balloon man with a violent tin horn almost threw me into hysterics.

When we got down as far as the Holland House, we wanted to cross Broadway, and there we got in a pickle. In the first place, we stood on the corner for fully ten minutes waiting for the street to get clear. As well wait for the Mississippi to run dry! Then we started, and wound up backed in behind a big dray, with an electric car tearing right at us, and Jimmy and I arm in arm, both pulling frantically in opposite directions.

If it hadn't been for a blue-coated guardian of the peace, the stars would

have finished up their job right there. As it was, that noble defier of destiny yanked us out of the frying-pan—whereupon, as will be seen, we immediately sat down in the fire.

No sooner had we landed high and dry on the sidewalk than fate started in with a pair of seven-league boots. We were debating whether it would be safer to walk home or take a cab, when a man in a tremendous hurry brushed between us and dropped a small box on the pavement. I called after him, but he paid no attention, and before we could pick it up he was lost in the crowd. Then we examined the box.

It looked to be like a two-pound box of chocolates; but Jimmy, who had seen the man's face, which he declared was villainous, rather inclined to the belief that it contained stolen jewels. I wanted him to leave it in the street, but he insisted on taking it home. So he stuck it in the pocket of his Norfolk and promptly forgot all about it.

On the way home we stopped in Jake Medford's for some nerve tonic, and there a most peculiar thing occurred. Jimmy heard a machine. Then I heard it. Buzz—buzz—tick—tick! Then I didn't hear it—then I did again. It sounded like a runaway clock.

Jake declared that there wasn't a machine on the premises, and, further, that his clock couldn't be heard ten feet away. We went a hundred feet away and still we heard it. We went around the block, and heard it all the time. In fact, we heard it all the way home.

This puzzled us so much that we temporarily forgot the stars. But they were working, all right—working overtime. Jimmy got so excited about it that he stopped people on the street to inquire if they heard anything that sounded like a machine.

Most of them said "No," but one man was obliging enough to remark that he believed he did, and guessed it was the wheels in Jimmy's head.

This retort put a quietus on the machine business, and we made up our minds that the noise either came from the stars or the refreshment of which we had partaken liberally.

Eventually, we got back to the club, and in the lobby we separated. I went in to order breakfast, and Jimmy went up-stairs to change his clothes and see about having his trunk packed.

For a man contemplating a few hours' distant journey into eternity, I thought this a very silly proceeding, and remonstrated. But Jimmy thought it quite as sensible to change his clothes as to eat, very justly observing that wherever he went, he might depend on being fed, but not on suitable raiment—at least, not custom-made.

Immediately upon our separation I ceased to hear the machine, and Jimmy remarked when he came down that he had shaken it off a few minutes later. We came to the conclusion that the thing was incomprehensible, and I intended to ask Doc Adams if brandy-and-soda frequently affected people that way.

If I had only asked him then! Oh, if I only had! But I didn't, and the stars went right on working.

It is a remarkable thing what a good breakfast will do for a man. The most morbid character cheers up when led into the presence of a soufflé omelet and a broiled squab. The most hardened individual softens at the sight of a hot, crisp slice of nicely buttered toast; and a French roll induces superlative amiability.

We perked up amazingly. Here it was half past ten, the day rolling on beautifully. Here we were—condemned to torment, but quite happy. Had we not braved the stars? We had. Had we not courted destruction? We had, but not with enthusiasm.

Were we not alive and well—in full possession of all our faculties? We thought we were. Couldn't a pair of strong-minded young men put fate clear out of business? We thought they could; anyway, we were going to.

Thus reflecting, we repaired gaily to the billiard-room, prepared to pass the intervening hours till lunch in pursuit of folly—thereby casting at destiny a bold defiance.

After we had played awhile, Ned Bronson came in. We invited him to

join the game, but he wouldn't, and, altogether, acted in a very strange manner: standing around at arm's length and looking as if he wanted to say something and didn't know how to begin.

By and by, while Jimmy was making a run, Bronson called me over to one side, and inquired whether I thought it was perfectly safe for *him*—with a jerk of his head in Jimmy's direction—to be running around loose? Naturally, I was thunderstruck, and wanted to know why not.

Well, it finally came out that Parsons, the club steward, had told Ned that Jimmy was afflicted with an incurable disease, and was liable to drop dead any minute. There was the result of my wretched conversation with Lester Maxwell.

I went straight to Parsons, and demanded to know why, in the name of forty devils, he had given out such a preposterous story.

Parsons was very sorry and very apologetic—Mr. Maxwell had told him that very morning that Mr. Morris was liable to drop dead any moment; therefore, he very artfully explained, Mr. Morris must be afflicted with an incurable disease, because it stood to reason that a man so close to death must have something; and, further, "if it could be cured, he wouldn't have it—now, would he?"

Also, on his sacred honor he hadn't breathed a word to any one but Mr. Bronson. However, if Parsons hadn't, Ned Bronson and Lester Maxwell had. I became very dolefully aware of the fact when I got back to the billiard-room.

The crowd was beginning to drop in for lunch, and most of them seemed to know something interesting if all the buttonholing and whispering that went on could be accepted as just evidence.

Fellows that generally hailed us with a slap on the back and an inquiry as to what particular form of beverage we would prefer to quench our thirst with, became, in passing, abnormally interested in the mural decorations or some friend on the other side of the room.

Old Doc Adams did hail us with a cheery greeting; but a minute afterward young Corey grabbed him over by the door, and I could almost hear the dear old gentleman saying: "Dear me! you don't say so! How sad!"

I wanted to stand up on the table and shriek forth: "It's a lie—a lie—a lie!" But I didn't.

As for Jimmy, he was utterly oblivious to everything. He played the game with great precision, whistling gleefully all the time, and seemed to have wholly forgotten the extensive plans which fate and the sorceress had mapped out for him.

So we played on and on and on, until I got a "please remit" notice from my stomach, reminding me that I had not had any lunch. Then we put up our cues and repaired to the café.

On the way we stopped a hall-boy and ordered a hansom for two o'clock. We ordered it thirty minutes ahead of time, so that in case the horse broke a leg or the driver should be suddenly smitten with apoplexy, we would still have plenty of time.

I ordered the lunch—quite a gala affair. The waiter, who we afterward discovered was in league with the stars, departed with the order and returned with a newspaper—"an extra," he explained, as he deposited it in front of my plate.

I glanced at it. Oh, fatal glance! Oh, fiendish sheet! The first thing that caught my eye was labeled: *"Look Out for Bomb!"* in flaming letters extending across the whole page. Then followed a remarkable story which I read—yes, read, and read out loud. I have preserved it, and here it is:

LOOK OUT FOR BOMB!

Infernal Machine Loose in Streets of New York, Set to Explode at Three To-day—Police Making Desperate Efforts to Recover It.

Giuseppe Molvino, an Italian anarchist, was taken in custody by the police on Broadway near Forty-third Street this morning, on information received by the chief of police in an anonymous letter stating that the anarchist was preparing to dynamite the City

Hall. A thorough search of the man failed to reveal the bomb. At first he denied the whole matter, but, after spending an hour in the sweat-box, admitted his identity and confessed criminal intentions.

The bomb, he said, was to be placed in the City Hall at noon to-day, and, according to plans, would explode at three—the hour when the mayor is to meet the railroad commissioners.

Malvino claims that, anticipating his arrest this morning, he dropped the bomb on Broadway opposite the Holland House. He describes it as about the size of a cigar-box, wrapped in white paper and containing a clockwork ignition arrangement, embedded in guncotton. He further affirms that the devilish instrument was wound up and set to explode at three to-day.

Broadway in the vicinity of the Holland House has been scoured for the missing box, but in vain. The police are making desperate efforts to recover it, hoping thus to avoid a frightful catastrophe.

When I had concluded this extraordinary newspaper story I looked at Jimmy. Ye gods! and what did I see? A face as white as the table-cloth, a pair of staring eyes, and a look of terrified horror that I shall never forget.

Before I could move, to say nothing of think, he shrieked out, in a voice which filled the room and flowed out into the corridors: "Good Lord! I've got it!"

Well, I knew what he'd got in a minute, but nobody else did, and such a confusion you never saw. One man thought it was the snakes, and another one suggested smallpox. The consensus of opinion seemed to be that Jimmy was crazy, and that I was trying to conceal it.

Finally, Doc Adams pushed through the crowd and grabbed Jimmy's pulse. But he couldn't get any information—that is, any of the kind he wanted, because Jimmy just kept rambling along about the stars and the sorceress and the hand of fate, etc. Then Doc gave him up and started in on me.

"Billy," said he coaxingly, "what's the matter? What kind of disease has he got?"

"Disease?" I repeated, being pretty well dazed myself. "Disease? Why, Doc, he hasn't got any disease. It's an infernal machine, and I think—er—I'm afraid it's going off very soon."

There was considerable talk about putting both of us in strait-jackets for the safety of the community, but when we finally succeeded in convincing them that we were not crazy, you should have seen them fade away!

In the meantime, some enthusiastic individual had sent in a fire-alarm; in fact, I think he must have sent in several. Anyway, the response was liberal and prompt. An engine company was the first to arrive, and the way they tore things up was a caution. Before we could stop them they had demolished the street door and were hard at work on the vestibule.

I went out and explained. By that time the street was packed—hook and ladders, patrols, hose-carts, chemicals, and people all jumbled together and all mad.

I wanted them to take the infernal machine away, but they said that wasn't in their line of business. They said some other things, too, that I wouldn't like to repeat.

When I got back to the office, Jimmy and Parsons were engaged in a very heated argument. Jimmy contended that Parsons, being steward of the club and custodian of its property, ought to go straight up-stairs and bring down the box.

Parsons, on the other hand, declared quite as emphatically that the club did not pay his life-insurance premiums; that he had never bothered an infernal machine in his life, and was altogether too old to commence now.

Not wishing to intrude my presence in this delicate matter, I proceeded to the telephone and demanded the police.

I got them finally, after I had been connected with the Stock Exchange and the city morgue; and they said they would be right over, and to be sure and keep the bomb till they got there—a very necessary caution!

I went back to the office. Jimmy and Parsons were watching the clock and still arguing about who should go after the box. They were just as far from a successful conclusion as they had been when they started; in fact, farther, because, you see, each one of them kept

thinking up new reasons why the other one ought to go.

But when they caught sight of me they immediately became unanimous—I ought to go. Wasn't I heart-whole and fancy-free? Hadn't I lived a clean life? Did I have any reason to fear death? Had I a wife and children dependent on me for their daily bread? I wasn't even engaged—was I?

"No—emphatically no!" from Jimmy and Parsons simultaneously. Therefore I must go.

But I didn't, because just then the police department arrived. They came in their official carriage, and there were ten of them: nine policemen and one detective.

The detective was a little, short, stocky man with a round head and a pink shirt. He introduced himself as Mr. Jones, of the Central Office. We said we were glad to see him, and we meant it.

After this we told him the whole story. When we got to the finding of the box, he promptly arrested Jimmy as a dangerous crook. Then he arrested me for being an accessory before the fact, and Parsons because he looked like a suspicious character.

We didn't care. We were glad. I hoped they would take us away and lock us up, but they didn't.

"Now," says Jones, with the air of a conquering Cæsar, "we will take the box."

At this, the nine policemen looked very worried, and five of them went out to the door to see if the horses were all right. We explained very humbly to Detective Jones that the box was upstairs in Jimmy's room. At which information he was quite perceptibly displeased. In fact, he took it as a personal affront.

We were very sorry, but what could we do? There was the box, and here were we. Moreover, it was past two, and, as Jimmy very justly remarked, in joggling the thing about we might have set it forward a few minutes—so they had better hurry.

Right here a new cause for delay turned up. Jimmy and Parsons and I, being criminals in durance vile, refused to see any logical reason why we should lead the way. It was entirely out of order. Criminals must be closely guarded, and how could we be closely guarded if we walked ahead?

Why, we would have any number of chances to escape; and, if we wanted to, we could rush into the room, seize the box, and exterminate the whole outfit.

This last argument finally killed the deadlock, and we started. Jones headed the procession, with Jimmy and me arm in arm about ten feet behind.

Ten feet farther back was Parsons, followed by a thin line of blue, consisting of four policemen in skirmish order. The other six stayed down-stairs to watch the horses and guard the door.

About this time the stars rolled up their sleeves and started in, in dead earnest. The parade left the starting-point at precisely ten minutes past two, and, having climbed the stairs—for the elevator-boy was nowhere to be found—and proceeded down the hall, arrived before the door of Jimmy's room in good order a few moments later.

Jones ostentatiously loosened the revolver in his hip pocket, and, with a whispered command for silence—Heaven knows why; I don't—threw open the door and stalked into the room.

We followed as far as the threshold, and there, lo and behold! was Williams, the club valet, assiduously brushing a suit of clothes, and expressing no more interest in his mutton-chopped face than a wooden Indian.

"Where is the box?" roared Jones.

"Where is the box?" repeated we three in the door. And—"Where is the box?" echoed the four heroes outside.

Williams looked anxiously from one face to another. Evidently he was in the plot, so Jones arrested him at once.

"Box?" said the wretched valet blankly. "Box? What box?"

"A little white box!" Jimmy explained.

"A little white box—white box—box?" He repeated this several times, varying the emphasis. At last the valet saw a gleam of light. "Oh, sir, the box! the little white box! Oh, it's all

right, sir. The little clock, sir? Yes, sir. I packed it up in your trunk, sir."

"Trunk?" shrieked the eight voices in unison. "What trunk?"

"Why," mumbled the unfortunate man, "your trunk, sir—Mr. Morris. The one for Narragansett. The expressman got it not ten minutes ago. It was on the table, sir, with your clothes, and I supposed you wanted it packed. I'm sorry, sir, if I've made a mistake, sir."

But there was no response, for by this time the whole party had started on a wild run for the street. As for the stars, they pulled up their belts another notch and rolled into the last lap.

However, we didn't get any farther than the office, and there we held a consultation—that is, we all expressed our opinions in loud voices at the same time.

Jones said that the next thing to do was to proceed to the depot in a body. There he struck a snag. Parsons said he couldn't possibly leave the club—he was responsible for the property, he would lose his job—he had a wife and three children dependent on him for their daily bread. Besides, he wasn't well enough to go out. But Jones looked fierce, and some of the policemen took out their clubs, so his protests subsided into occasional groans.

I had been contemplating an objection on my own hook, but circumstances led me to believe that it would be in vain.

Then the prisoners were lined up, we three and Williams, and under a heavy guard we marched out of the house and into the "hurry-up" wagon.

We started off gaily, but didn't get far. About twenty feet from the door a wheel came off. The driver wasn't surprised at all. He said the wheels often did that, but he thought he could put it on in fifteen minutes.

I looked at my watch—it was half past two! The nine policemen said it was too bad, but I don't think they meant it. They wished us all kinds of luck, and hoped they would be able to get in for the finish. Then they sat down on the curbstone and watched the driver.

Jones kept his head perfectly. I thought he was either the bravest man or the biggest fool I had ever seen, but I couldn't quite decide which.

He said the next thing to do was to get a hack—that man was positively loaded with expedients. He ran out into the street and shouted: "Hack! Hack!" But there was no hack.

The only unoccupied vehicle in sight was the hansom which we had ordered for two o'clock. Jones said it would have to do, so we got in—that is, some of us got in.

The cabman protested vigorously, asserting that the vehicle was only intended for two people, that the springs wouldn't stand the strain, that the horse couldn't pull such a load, and finally ended up with Parson's favorite, that he had a wife and three children at home dependent on him for their daily bread.

At this point Jones exhibited a beautiful silver star, and informed the cabman that if he wasn't at the Grand Central Station in something under seven minutes, he would be arrested for aiding and abetting a crime, with the prospects of spending the rest of his natural life in Sing Sing.

That man Jones was a genius. I never saw such a magnetic personality—he fairly exuded authority all over. Did we go? Did we! We flew.

Jimmy and Parsons and I were located on the seat. Jones, the captain, glued himself to the bridge in front of us, and Williams was somewhere. We saw his head now and then when we hit an unusually hard bump.

There was no conversation and no opportunity for any. We just hung on to each other and watched the scenery floating by in a sort of kaleidoscopic arrangement.

Things got so bad, that, with the horse trying to climb over a fruit-stand, an electric car endeavoring to ram us behind, a large group of angry pedestrians threatening us bodily injury, and two policemen approaching at top speed, finally I made up my mind that it was Hobson's choice between the cab and the infernal machine.

However, I reckoned without Jones. That inimitable individual rose to the occasion gloriously. He removed his coat and permitted the radiant insignia of his noble office to dazzle the eyes of our besiegers. He hurled defiance at them. He threatened them with instant death and complete extermination. He roared at the quaking cabman: "Drive on! Drive on!"

And we did. We went through everything. We left pieces of the cab along the way, but we lost nothing, because we picked up pieces of other vehicles at frequent intervals. And while we three inside shuddered and quaked, expecting every moment to be the last, our captain, clinging with both hands to the rail—I mean the dashboard—directed our onslaughts and shrieked forth, ever and anon: "Make way! Make way! Drive on."

The path before us seemed to magically spread open. Children fled, women screamed, strong men gasped; even the blue-garbed statues at the crossing fell back in consternation. We left destruction in our wake, but paused not, while before us on the bridge Jones, like Nelson at Trafalgar, thundered forth his orders, and, facing the foe, flinched not.

When we begged him, with tears in our eyes, to desist, that mighty man smiled—aye, smiled, in the face of calamity. He waved his hand gently toward the front, but spake no word. It was enough. We were not satisfied, but admiration held us speechless. We went on; we got there. In fact, I believe we had some thirty seconds to spare.

Jones told the cabby to wait—which he was quite liable to do, anyway, not having received his fare—and ran for the baggage-room. Well, you know what a baggage-room is! There were about fifty people lined up before the counter, and every one of them had to catch a train that left in three minutes.

On the other side of the official hedge a few gentlemen in shirt-sleeves were strolling about in a leisurely way, which seemed to say that trains might come and trains might go, for all they cared.

Parsons had the claim-check, so he took it out and rapped on the counter. After awhile he got tired, and I relieved him. Then Jones got mad, and things began to happen. He seized the check and bent it double the first lick.

This action didn't fail to secure the attention of a mild-eyed gentleman in a blue shirt.

"Wot in thunder d'you want?" inquired the mild-eyed, in a very belligerent tone.

"I want this trunk," roared Jones, laying the check down again with enough energy to reduce it to its normal condition. "Ye do, do ye?" says the blue shirt. "Well, get in line and stay there till your turn comes. See!"

Jones arrested him at once.

O mighty Jones! O sublime man! No obstacle was too great for your gigantic stride; no mountain too steep; no river too deep. Roll on, oceans, thunder, tempests; Jones, like Gibraltar, towers in your midst calm, serene, invincible, shedding peace on one hand and destruction on the other. Jones might have said, with Cæsar: *"Veni, vidi, vici."*

We were amazed, stunned, thrilled. We were willing to stand in the ranks with such a man to lead. We were proud of him. I could have cried with Porthos: "Push on, captain, we are behind you."

The enthusiasm of the chase bounded in my veins. I longed to see the prey—at a respectable distance. I wanted to go on—on—on; so did Jimmy; so did Parsons; so did Williams.

At the conquest of the blue shirt we even broke into a faint cheer. Jones was pleased. He smiled on us, and we were happy.

But all was not over—the trunk could not be found. Then somebody had an inspiration, and remembered that the trunk was on the train. We proceeded to the train—proceeded is an inadequate term—we flew. It lacked fifteen minutes of three!

A young man was sitting in the door of the baggage-car, swinging his legs and whistling melodiously. There was no time wasted in useless parley—trust

Jones for that! He extended the check and bade the trunk appear.

The young man stopped whistling and informed us that he wasn't the baggage-man; that that official had gone around the corner for a drink and would be back in ten minutes; and, further, that he had no authority to give us anything.

I expected confidently that a bolt would fall out of the blue and annihilate him. It did, but it was a new sort of bolt. Jones folded his arms and gloomily surveyed the scene. When he spoke it was in a soft, sad tone.

"Young man," he said, "in that trunk is an infernal machine set to explode at three o'clock. I am sorry for you—so sorry."

Well, that trunk came out so fast it made my head swim. Jimmy got out his keys and proffered them to our savior.

"Here," he said, in a voice tense with emotion. "You are the captain. Proceed."

But, no! Jones knew his place, and even though Mr. Morris was in custody, Jones had every confidence in the honor of Mr. Morris. It was Mr. Morris' trunk, and it was for Mr. Morris to open it. That was the law.

Jimmy muttered something which may have been an expression of gratitude at this unlooked-for exhibition of faith, and opened it.

There was the box. He picked it up gingerly and offered it to Jones. But that majestic creature had his hands in his pockets, and was staring abstractedly at the roof. Then he held it out to me, and I said "No" politely.

Jimmy tried to bestow it on Parsons, but that gentleman started in on the wife-and-three-children story, so Jimmy gave it up. I saw him looking anxiously around for Williams, but the valet was out of danger; he had gone back to make sure the cab was safe.

Then we started—Jimmy in the middle, carrying the box outstretched in both hands like a tray full of cut glass. We got through the waiting-room all right, and everything went along nicely till we reached the sidewalk.

There a big, burly man bumped into Jimmy and joggled him. Well, I stopped breathing, and tried to keep my knees quiet—but nothing happened. In fact, nothing would have happened if Jimmy had kept his mouth shut. You see, Jimmy was keyed up to the breaking-point, and he just naturally broke.

"You fool!" he shrieked. "I've got an infernal machine here, and it's due to blow up in ten minutes."

The man went away, so did our cab, so did everything else in the vicinity that wasn't nailed down.

"What shall we do?" cried Jimmy. "Oh, what shall we do? Suggest something, for God's sake, quick!"

I couldn't suggest anything. I couldn't even think. But Jones was there—Jones the resourceful, the unconquerable.

"The river," he said. "You can just make it. Run!"

Jimmy needed no second bidding. He ran. Behind Jimmy came Jones and I, neck and neck, then Parsons, then Williams. We took the middle of the street, and we tore.

Now, sad to relate, our cabman, who had been hovering on the outskirts, witnessed our departure, and, laboring under the delusion that we were trying to beat him out of his fare, he yelled: "Stop thief!" and joined the chase.

Before you could shake a stick, everybody in the neighborhood was yelling the same thing, and pelting in behind. There were hundreds of them, thousands; the next time I looked back there were millions.

I glanced at Jones. His face was pale; he was stumped. He shouted at Jimmy to stop; but Jimmy must have thought he said "Go!" because he certainly went.

The people ahead of us got out of the way all right and fell in behind—all but one, a fat blue wall studded with brass tacks. I saw this thing, and my heart went down into my shoes.

Jones was whirling his arms like an animated windmill, and distributing life sentences and sudden death indiscriminately over everything. He, too, had seen.

A short block away the river shimmered in the sunlight—so close and yet so far! I tried to say a prayer, but I couldn't. My whole life rolled out before my eyes like a panorama. My misdeeds occupied a very large section, and I wondered if my punishment would be very severe. I saw all the old-time faces piled up around me in tangled heaps. My throat was parched, and the gasps that came through it burned like the blast of a furnace.

I wanted to stop, but I couldn't, and I ran on blindly.

And Jimmy—well, Jimmy was doing a nine-second clip straight at the wall, his head down, and the box held out straight before him. It was too late—too late! I shrieked—everybody shrieked but Jimmy and the wall. He was almost there. Now—now I shut my eyes, and the next moment tripped over Jimmy, hit the wall, bounced back, and sat down hard on the scattered fragments of what had once been a very ordinary eight-day clock.

Just then I saw the stars, and they were laughing.

IN THE LAND OF MANDALAY

ELEPHANTS dearly love a joke, says a keeper of these unwieldy creatures. When engaged in the timber trade, in Burma, I observed some queer pranks played by them. I saw a calf play a most ludicrous trick on its mother. The older animal was hauling a log, which fifty coolies could not have moved, from a river to the saw-mills, quite unsuspicious of any guile in the bosom of her offspring. The youngster took a turn with his trunk round one of the chain traces, and pulled back with all his might. This additional weight caused the mother to stop and look behind her; but, discovering the cause, she gravely shook her head, and prepared to resume her task of drawing the log to the mill.

This was just what the little imp expected; and, before the strain was put on again, he kicked out the iron hook which fastened the long chain to the log. As the mother again began to pull, he held back with all his strength on the chain until her muscles were in full play, and then suddenly let go. The effect was disastrous in the extreme. Down went the old elephant on her knees, and the driver described a most graceful and prolonged curve before he landed on the ground. But, like a cat, he struck on his feet, and, blurting out some heavy Burmese exclamations of wrath, he whispered a few words in the ear of the amazed victim of this unfilial practical joke. She seemed to understand him at once, and there ensued one of the most exciting chases it has ever been my good fortune to witness.

The calf scented danger and fled, pursued by the mother. The youngster was quicker in turning, but at last he was cornered. The maternal trunk smote him on the loins. He gave a shriek; at a second stroke he dropped on his knees, and took his punishment bravely and patiently. A few minutes later he walked past us to the shed; but his trunk was drooping, and the great tears were coursing silently down his india-rubber cheeks. I was sorry for the poor little fellow, and I noticed that at dinner-time his mother was gently rubbing him down with her trunk, and manifesting many signs of affection.

In the Cause of Freedom

By Arthur W. Marchmont

Author of "The Eternal Snare," "When I Was Czar," Etc.

SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED.

Robert Anstruther, an Englishman visiting Count Ladislas Tuleski in Russian Poland, becomes acquainted with Volna Drakona, a young girl whose uncle, Count Peter Valdemar, is a famous Polish conspirator. While Count Valdemar is out driving with Volna his carriage is upset and he is killed. Robert Anstruther comes to Volna's aid and they take possession of certain papers which Count Valdemar was carrying to friends of the Polish Freedom Fraternity in Cracow. Volna declares that her mother's life is in danger unless the papers are delivered, and she and Anstruther start for Cracow under the names of Robert and Margaret (Peggy) Garrett, assuming the characters of two of Anstruther's friends whose passports he carries. Reaching Pulta, they expect to get a train for Cracow, but the road is blocked by an accident and it is only after some adroit lying and liberal tipping of the officials that Anstruther is able to learn there will be no train till next morning.

CHAPTER VI.

VERY SISTERLY.

VOLNA was down before me the next morning, waiting in a little room where we had had supper.

"I guessed Bob would be tired, so I would not have him called," she said. "I have been up an hour or more."

"And Peggy, how is she?"

"Hungry. And breakfast is ready."

"You slept well?"

"When I had stopped thinking. I couldn't help it," she said, in answer to my shake of the head. "I was saying my lesson over and over, lest I should forget it. Do you know it?"

"Lesson?"

"All the names you mentioned so glibly last night at the station."

I laughed. "Oh! we sha'n't need to remember. We sha'n't have any more bother. That man's hint as to how to ask questions will carry us through. You'll see."

"Well, we must be quick; it's nearly ten o'clock."

"We've half an hour. And we're developing a knack of doing a good deal in half an hour."

"I think I shall be a little afraid of you."

"Why?"

"You tell them so readily."

"Ah! that's Bob Garrett. Don't worry about him. He won't tell them to you."

"I know that."

"I think that, for a pair of dangerous conspirators, we keep up our spirits capitally."

"I shouldn't be able to without you. I don't know what I should have done indeed, nor how to thank you."

"Wouldn't a man be a brute who didn't do his best to look after his sister?"

"You make light of everything."

"Well, you can thank me at about six or seven o'clock this evening. We shall be in Cracow then, and the papers will be out of our hands and off our minds."

"And after that?"

This story began in the September issue, which can be obtained through any newsdealer. Price ten cents.

"By Jove! I don't know. I haven't thought about that. One thing at a time, and Cracow first. We must go."

We walked up to the station and found a most welcome change in the attitude of the police. Our friend of the preceding night was looking out for us, and he had evidently let it be known that there were gold pieces to be earned. Everybody received us with smiles. Even the man who had acted the inquisitor's part overnight came up, and was almost profuse in his apologies.

He had not known that I was an English milord; my appearance at that time had aroused curiosity; duty compelled them all to be suspicious; there were dangerous people about; I had probably heard of the discovered plot; and so on.

I understood. I took out some gold coins and fingered them carelessly. His eyes lighted with greed as he gazed at them.

"About the accident?" I asked.

"There has been a bad accident; but no one of the name of Trevor, no Englishman at all, was in the train. I have made a special investigation," he added insinuatingly.

"I'm sorry to have given you the trouble; but thank you."

"It is no trouble, only a pleasure to be of some small service to an English milord."

"I am greatly relieved," I said. "You probably have been obliged to pay some one for the work. Permit me to repay you;" and I gave him a fifty-ruble note. His good-will was cheap at a five-pound note; but he seemed amazed at so generous a tip. His face beamed as he pocketed it.

"Really, it is not necessary," he said. "If I can be of any further assistance, pray tell me."

"My sister and I were thinking of going to Cracow," I said indifferently. "Is the line safe, do you think?"

"You still wish to see the British consul there?" This with just a shade of anxiety.

"Oh, dear no! unless it is to express my high opinion of the courtesy shown me here. Last night is forgotten. I quite understand."

"The train will start at eleven. It is usual—a mere matter of form, of course, in your case—to ask for passports when issuing tickets for stations beyond the frontier."

"Here they are;" and I took them out of my pocketbook, making sure that he should see there was plenty of money there. "Robert Garrett and Margaret Garrett, my sister."

He just glanced at them, and, with a bow to Volna, returned them.

"Shall I show you where to get your tickets?" He was making everything delightfully smooth for us.

"I suppose we shall reach Cracow by about four?" I asked casually, as I took out my cigar-case.

"Scarcely that, I fear. The traffic is disorganized, and the direct line has been closed. You will travel by way of Bratinsk and change there; and then go round by the loop, which joins the main line again at Solden."

The ill news was so unexpected that it caught me right off my guard. To go to Bratinsk meant walking right into the hands of the men who were hunting for us.

To cover my sudden confusion, I let my cigar-case fall, and, as the official stooped to pick it up, I caught Volna's look of dire dismay, and shot her a warning glance.

"You smoke, of course," I said to him; and as we lit our cigars, I was thinking how on earth to get out of the difficulty.

Then Volna gave another proof of her quick-wittedness. "Ought you to smoke just yet, Bob?" she asked in a snappy, sisterly tone. "You know what the doctor said about your heart."

I took the cue. "You're always interfering, Peggy," I said very testily. "I wish you wouldn't."

The police official affected not to hear this little interchange of family amenities, and discreetly looked away.

"I only do it for your good," she rapped back, with a great air of superiority. "You complained of that feel-

ing, you know. But please yourself. You always do."

"Rubbish. It's only because you know I want to go and you want to stay."

She shrugged her shoulders and turned away.

"If you are going, the time is close," said the official.

"Of course I am going;" and I scowled at Volna and took out some money. "Where do we get the tickets?"

He was turning to show me when I let the coins fall and the cigar drop from my lips as I pressed one hand to my heart—which, by the way, was as sound as a bell—and clutched him with the other for support.

"I knew it by the look about your eyes. I saw it coming," said Volna unsympathetically, as she stooped to pick up the money, and the man helped me to a seat. "You *will* do these things. Please lay him straight down and get him some water; or, better, a drop of brandy."

She took off my hat and fanned me with her handkerchief.

"It's nothing serious," she said to the others who came round. "He'll be better in a moment. Thank you"—this to the man who came back with the brandy. "Give him air, please."

She was most businesslike and sisterly, as though I had been in the habit of fainting daily, and she of restoring me.

I came round, of course; but not until the train had left and the question of our return to Bratinsk was settled.

"Perhaps you are satisfied now," I said to Volna most ungraciously, as I sat up.

"How absurd you are, Bob! I didn't give you the cigar."

"When is the next train?" I asked the official.

"Not until to-night."

"There you are," I said to Volna, with a brotherly readiness to put all the blame on her. "What now?"

"This gentleman said there was some fine scenery here; and a ride or drive would do you good."

"Scenery!" I cried contemptuously.

"Well," she retorted, "we can't sit about the station all day. But do as you please." And she walked out of the station. I could have laughed at the excellent affectation of sisterly discontent.

The police official sympathized with me—it was I who had tipped him—and expressed his feeling with a deprecating smile and shrug, and a lifting of the brows.

"I suppose it's the only thing to do," I murmured as I rose.

"It is, perhaps, for the best, after all, that you did not catch the train. There is your baggage," he said.

"Baggage?"

"Remembering what you said last night about the accident to your carriage on the way from Vashtic, and thinking you might need the baggage in it, I sent out this morning to have it brought here."

"Did you? That's really very friendly and obliging," I managed to answer quite cordially, while wishing him at the devil for his interference.

"What shall we do with it?"

"Oh, just keep it at the station here till I come back for that evening train. You'll know it easily. Two leather portmanteaus; one marked 'R. G.' and one 'M. G., London.' I'll go and tell my sister. She'll be as delighted as I am at your thoughtfulness. It was only that which made her wish to remain here for the day."

I went after Volna, who was walking toward the little town.

"That's a nice, thoughtful fellow," I began. "He has sent out some one to find our luggage in the broken-down trap and bring it in. I told him how glad you'd be."

"Should I go back and thank him?" she asked.

"I don't think it's necessary; you can do that when we get back this evening. We are going for a ride now; and the sooner we're off the better."

I went to the stable where my horse was, thinking how to get over the rather awkward difficulty of securing a second animal.

I did not intend to return to Pulta;

and if I hired the horse I should not be able to return it. To buy it might create suspicion, as a man does not purchase a horse merely to go for a ride, even in that horse-bartering region; and I had no wish to turn horse-thief.

I put a bold face on the matter and went into the stable, whistling. An ostler was grooming my horse, and the owner of the place looking on.

"That's a nice-looking animal of yours," he said.

"Yes; and as good as he looks."

"No doubt. Andreas knows a good horse."

"Andreas? Who's he?"

"At Bratinsk; where you got him, I suppose."

I scented danger and fenced. "I suppose you know most of the horses round about here. Will you smoke?" And I gave him a cigar.

"I know this one. I sold him to Andreas."

"Did you? Well, I don't care anything about Andreas, but I know he's a good horse, and I want to hire one as good for my sister to ride to-day."

"I can find you one. There he stands."

I had a look at him. A good horse I saw at a glance.

"I like his looks," I said.

The ostler took him out and ran him up and down. Then an idea occurred to me, involving some of the white lies of necessity, however. I expressed a very exaggerated admiration.

"Carry a lady?"

"Carry a baby," was the reply.

"Then I tell you what I'll do if you'll agree. We're going to Cracow for a couple of days and coming back; and when we come back we shall want two horses. I'll buy him from you if you can find me a couple of saddles, and if we can come to terms about your taking care of both the horses while we stay here."

It did not take very long to conclude the bargain, and Volna and I were soon mounted.

Just as we were starting, my friend of the police came up.

"Going for the ride, then?" he asked knowingly.

"Oh, yes. By the way, has that luggage of mine come in yet?"

"No. They ought to have been back long before now."

"That's a nuisance. My sister has to do without her habit."

"She looks very charming," he replied, with a bow.

"What time must we be back for that train?"

"Six o'clock. But why not ride to Solden?—it's not more than twenty miles or so. You could take the train there."

"Oh, no. We're going the other way."

"Are you ever coming, Bob?" asked Volna sharply.

He stepped aside with another significant shrug of the shoulders, and with a laugh I rode off.

"You do the vinegary sister to the life," I said.

"There was cause, then. I caught sight of that police agent from Bratinsk in the distance."

"By Jove!" I exclaimed; and we clattered off through the narrow streets, and, as soon as we were clear of the town, gave our horses their heads.

CHAPTER VII.

THE LUCK TURNS.

Volna was thoroughly at home in the saddle, and it was easy to see that she had been accustomed to horses all her life. She had a perfect seat, and that firm hand and control which bring out the best there is in a horse.

It was delightful to watch her; and as we kept at it in that first rattling stretch I believe that in the sheer exhilaration of the ride we forgot everything—even the unwelcome appearance of the police agent from Bratinsk.

But neither the pace nor the oblivion could last forever, and when we drew rein at the foot of a hill, we came back to a recollection of the load of our worries.

"Wasn't that glorious?" she cried,

her cheeks glowing and her eyes shining, as she stretched forward and patted her horse's neck.

"You ride magnificently. How you would enjoy a run with the hounds in England!"

"I have read about it. I love horses. I can keep in the saddle all day. I have done it at home." Then her face clouded. "How selfish! I had almost forgotten," she added.

"We are doing all we can," I replied. "Are you sure that the man you saw was that police agent?"

"Could I forget him?"

"You don't think he saw us?"

"No. He was talking very earnestly to some one. But I recognized him instantly."

"I'd give something to know what brought him to Pulta."

"He was following us, surely."

"We must hope not. If Michel did his work properly, my horse with your uncle's coat will have been found a good many miles on the other side of Bratinsk; and his men should be hunting for us there. But I can't say I like the look of the thing."

"What shall we do?"

"We'd better try and think what he will do. I had intended to take the hint which the man at Pulta dropped, to ride to Solden, and take the train from there. But if the other man picks up our trail there, he'll set the wires going, and we shall find some one waiting for us at Solden."

"How far is it to Cracow? Could we ride all the way? I could ride all day and all night, too, if necessary, as long as the horses will last out."

"We don't know the road. I don't even know where we are now. When you saw that man, I just rattled off at hazard. I know Cracow is pretty well west of Pulta; a little bit south, too, and I guess we are on the right road. I am accustomed to take long rides, and, besides having a fairly good bump of location, always carry this." And I showed her a small compass on my watch-chain.

"I always ride by the sun; but then I know the country round Warsaw for ever so many miles"

"We should be in a pretty pickle if we were lost," said I.

"The pickle would be worse if it were a police preserve."

"By Jove! it would. And the worst of it is, that if that fellow hears of us at Pulta, he'll know the names we've taken."

"Poor Bob, I'm getting him into very troubled waters."

"It's not Bob or Peggy I'm thinking of; it's Volna, and Volna's mother. Cracow seems a mighty hard place to reach, but I'm going to get there, somehow."

I was silent for awhile, thinking over the problem. Volna's suggestion was the best, if we could do it—to ride all the way to Cracow. But it was no light undertaking.

If I had known the way, I should not have hesitated; but the days were short, and, although the sun was shining brightly enough then, the weather looked as though it were going to change. It was warmer; and when a spell of frost breaks in that country, it generally indicates that rain or snow is coming. To be lost in a rain- or snow-storm would be a very ugly predicament indeed.

There was, moreover, the awkward question whether we were likely to be pursued. On the other hand, to stop at Solden appeared to be even more risky.

Seeing me thus thoughtful, Volna broke in: "You are not going to keep anything from me, are you? Don't do that, please? Do you think that man is likely to ride after us from Pulta?"

"That was just in my mind. I should say it will depend upon how soon he learns anything about us. He is more likely to trust to the wires."

"It's getting very exciting. He may telegraph ahead and have people sent out to stop us. I suppose I ought not to say so, but I am beginning to feel a sort of keen enjoyment."

"I have made up my mind. We'll stick to the horses and avoid the trains. But we'll try and mislead any one who may follow us."

We had already passed several people on the road, and I stopped the next comer.

"Is this the road to Solden?" I asked the man, evidently a farmer.

"Yes, one of them."

"Straight road?"

"As straight as roads are in these parts," he replied, with a grin.

"I mean, do I have to turn to the left or right?"

"You'll be turning most of the time. You're from Pulta, aren't you?"

"It's not where I'm from, but where I'm going that concerns me."

"All right. I know the lady's horse." And on he drove without another word.

"Everybody seems to know everybody else's horse about here," I said. "If it weren't awkward, it would be comical. We'll ride on and try the next man."

The next was another farmer: a surly Russian, who understood Polish with difficulty, and spoke it unintelligibly. So I thanked him and rode on, no wiser.

Three or four miles brought us to a village.

"Had we not better get some food here?" asked Volna. "I will go and buy it, and perhaps can find out at the same time what road we ought to take."

We dismounted, and I waited with the horses.

Presently a priest came by, and bade me good day smilingly.

"You have a picturesque place here, father," I said. "What is it called?"

"Kervatje!" he answered; and we began to talk. I learned that his name was Father Ambrose, and after some while he asked: "You are a foreigner?"

"An Englishman. My sister is with me. We were going to Solden, but I fear have lost our way."

"Oh, no. Solden lies across the hills there. A rough road, but fairly direct. The only point of difficulty is just over the brow of the hill, where the road forks. Take that to the right, or you will go astray and might find yourselves in Cracow—after some forty miles or so!"

"I'll remember what you said," I replied, "and am much obliged to you."

"It is a pleasure. I have been in England, and speak English a little."

We then chatted about London and the incidents of his visit until Volna came up.

"My sister," I said.

As he greeted her I saw him start and look very closely at her.

"How do you do?" he said in English, to her complete discomfiture, holding out his hand. I read her signals of distress, and sailed in to the rescue.

"My sister is unfortunately dumb," I said.

"How sad!" he exclaimed, throwing up his hands. Then he looked puzzled. "She bears a remarkable resemblance to a very beautiful woman whom I knew in the long ago. Twenty years and more ago. She is a Pole, and is now the Countess Drakona. How very strange!"

"Yes, these chance likenesses are very extraordinary," I said gravely. "Come, Peggy, we must get on," I added to Volna, in English, and put her in the saddle again.

"How very sad!" he repeated mournfully. "And yet how clever of her to be able to make herself understood in buying things!"

"The education of the dumb in England is almost perfect. Signs are their language, you know," I replied, as I shook hands with him and mounted.

He looked after us very thoughtfully, and when presently I turned, he waved his hand to me, and I saw him walk a few paces, and then enter the shop where Volna had made her purchases.

"I think we'll rattle on again for a bit," I suggested. "He's going to find out that yours is a singular form of aphasia, and only affects your knowledge of English. Perhaps he'll class it as a case for the scientists; but more likely as one of suspicious ignorance."

"Who can he be?" asked Volna.

"He gave me his name as Father Ambrose."

"I have heard my mother speak of him."

"He spoke of her as a very beautiful woman."

"And she is still beautiful."

"And he said how closely you resembled her."

Volna laughed. "Bob mustn't be conventional. That's a sort of ballroom dandy's speech. And no brother talks like it."

"Brothers don't always say all they think."

"But they keep their thoughts to themselves."

"I know what I think about my sister," said I.

She smiled again, and glanced at me. "Don't you think I brought a huge parcel, Bob?"

"If we eat all that, it will last us farther than Cracow. But I know what it means generally, when a girl goes shopping."

"Yes, she thinks of things that are necessary. There are loaves in there for the horses."

"I never thought of them," I admitted.

"One of us must think sensibly," she retorted.

"True for you. But did you find out anything about the road to Solden?"

"No. A woman served me, and she knew nothing."

"Well, I found out from the priest. At the top of the hill yonder the road forks, and that to the left will take us to Cracow, forty miles."

"I wonder what he is thinking now he knows I am no mute."

"Men make all sorts of mistakes, and I shouldn't be in the least surprised if he believes we are just—running away together."

"Bob! How ridiculous!" she cried, with a merry laugh, her cheeks aflush. "Let us get on!" She shook the reins, and dashed on ahead.

When we reached the forked roads at the top of the hill, I glanced at my watch. It was nearly half-past three, and we had still forty miles to cover on an unknown road. It had taken us some three hours to do about twenty miles in daylight with the horses fresh —how long would they take to finish the journey mostly in the dark? I shook my head dubiously over the sum.

"We'll ride on a couple of miles or so, and then find a spot for our picnic; but we can't spare more than half an hour at the outside."

Black bread, sausage, and village cheese do not make an epicurean lunch; but Volna and I had rich hunger sauce, and were more than satisfied. We fed the horses while we were eating, to save time, and in half an hour were ready for the road again.

There was no longer any doubt that the weather was going to change. As we mounted, there were very ominous banks of dark, sullen clouds. Rain or snow would fall within a few hours; but I could only hope it would be rain.

"I fancy we've shaken off any pursuit, even if any one started out to follow us," I said.

"We are going to have some weather, too; that will help us. I hope Bob doesn't mind riding in the wet."

"You guessed the thought in my mind, eh?"

"No. I'm used to reading weather signs. The rain never hurts me. I've been out for hours in it. But we sha'n't have much for an hour or two, you'll find."

"We'd better make the most of our time, then."

We rode as fast as we dared push the horses, in view of the distance to be covered. I eased my animal up the hills, and now and again took a spell of half a mile or so on foot; but, despite this, I was concerned to find that, before we had covered another twenty miles, he began to show signs of fatigue.

Then the storm burst upon us. It was rain, not snow; but rain in almost tropical force. It would not have been so bad had we known the road; but already we had had to stop several times to make sure we were going right.

For two hours we plodded through a pelting storm until I was drenched, and feared that Volna must be in the same condition.

"I wouldn't care if I could see," she said once. It was pitch dark, and we could only go at a walking pace.

"I shouldn't care if you were not wet," I answered; "though I confess I'd like to know where we are."

"I am not very wet," she said. "My fur cloak protects me. We shall get somewhere in the end."

"In England we have a civilized habit of putting up sign-posts," I grumbled, as we came to another forked road, and I was at a loss which to choose. "All the roads seem to be twins in this place."

Which way to choose I could not even guess. I tried to judge which was the better road; but both appeared equally bad.

"Let the horses decide," said Volna. "Yours is the fresher of the two, and better able to use his instinct."

"Yours is much keener to get to a stable," she laughed.

I walked mine back a little distance, and then gave him his head. He walked deliberately to the side of the road, and began to crop the grass.

Volna tried hers then; and he went as far as the fork, where he waited for the other to join him. Then they both moved on to the left.

"So be it," said I, and we let them go as they would.

"It's not raining so fast," declared Volna presently. "Shall we draw up under a tree and give them the rest of the bread?"

"It'll be nice soft food," I laughed.

"I can wring my cloak, too, and ease the weight for my horse a little."

We pulled up under a tree and gave the horses the bread, munching a crust ourselves, and making the best of things. Volna's pluck was inextinguishable; and she laughed and joked over her plight as she wrung out the wet.

I struck a match and looked at my watch, and was startled to find it was nearly ten o'clock.

I told Volna, and we started again. The rain was much less, and the darkness had lifted somewhat; but I led my horse now instead of riding.

Presently I felt the road getting suspiciously soft and grassy, and some minutes afterward I stumbled up against a gate, which blocked the way and led into a wood.

There was nothing for it but to go back to the forked road. To make matters worse, the rain started again, and came pouring down even more violently than before.

Nor was that the worst. We got off the road again, and once more were brought to a standstill by a gate.

"It looks as though we were lost," I said.

"We've about reached the bottom of our troubles, I should think," replied Volna, still cheery. "But, if the chance offered, I should like to put off the rest of the ride till daylight. And, look! there's a light." She pointed to it gleefully, away to our left.

We made our way to it with trouble, and found that it came from the lower window of a small house.

I rapped at the door, and the light was instantly extinguished.

I had to knock again twice, and then a window above was opened, and a woman put her head out.

"Who are you, and what do you want? Are you the police?"

"Police? No. We have lost our way, and want shelter."

"There's no one in the house but me. How many are you?"

"Two—myself and my sister. We can pay you well."

She drew her head in for a minute, and then looked out again and said: "Are you sure you're only two? Let's see you."

We stood back that she could do so.

"I'll come down," she said.

When she opened the door, the light she held revealed to me one of the most forbidding faces I have ever seen.

"You've got horses, have you?" she said. "You must stall them in the shed."

She handed me a lantern, and Volna came with me. When we had fumbled our way to the shed, and tied the horses up, giving them some hay we found in the place, we went back to the house.

She admitted us without more delay, and, as soon as we were inside, locked and bolted the door. "A lone woman

needs to be careful," she said, in explanation, as she led us into a room, where a fire was burning.

Two glasses and a spirit bottle were on the table, and a smell of rank tobacco-smoke hung about the place.

Volna went in first; and the woman, having placed the light on the table, stood holding the door for us to pass.

"We are much obliged to you," I said; and as I turned to her, I caught sight of a man's face peering through the half-closed door of a dark room across the passage.

"I'll do my best for you," she answered. "Dry yourselves by the fire. I'll be back in a moment." With that she went out, and I heard her turn the key softly upon us.

It might mean nothing; but—well, I did not tell Volna.

CHAPTER VIII.

WHAT HAPPENED IN THE COTTAGE.

Volna walked up to the wood-fire, took off her fur turban, shook it, and laughed.

"Were you ever as wet before? I never was."

"I wonder if the woman can find you something to put on while the clothes are drying. What do you make of her?"

"She about fits the place," she replied, glancing round the room.

A wooden bench, a couple of wooden armchairs, a square table, and a black oak chest of drawers, with some unpainted shelving over it for crockery, pots, and pans, constituted the furniture; and for decoration, a couple of crude colored prints, Scriptural in subject and grimy with age, hung over the fireplace, with a piece of broken looking-glass on a string between them.

"Rough," I said, in answer to her look.

"It might be dirtier. It is always a good sign when a woman's care can be traced."

"She said she was a lone woman, so she can't have much else to do except look after the place."

Volna smiled. "Didn't you see those?" And she pointed to a pair of men's boots by the chest of drawers. "Probably wood-cutter or charcoal-burner, or something of that sort; often very honest people."

I thought of the man's face I had seen, and said nothing.

"Have you your flask?" I took it out. "Good! Then I shall warm some water, and you must have a hot drink." In a minute she had cleaned a small saucepan, and had the water on the fire.

"I wish the woman would come back," I grumbled. "I want you to get your wet clothes off."

"I shouldn't call her," replied Volna.

"Why not?"

"I shouldn't let her know that we saw her lock the door."

"Did you notice that?"

"That's deliciously manlike, Bob. Of course we're in a very queer place; but we may as well pretend we see nothing odd and suspect nothing. We're not really blind, however."

"I begin to think Peggy's more wonderful than ever," said I, with a chuckle.

The woman came in then with a bundle of clothes on her arm; and her manner was very different.

She was a hideous creature truly; the upper part of her face was seamed with what might have been two knife slashes, and one cheek was quite disfigured with marks like those which vitriol leaves. When she spoke or smiled, her mouth drew up to the side, disclosing long yellow fangs of teeth.

"Ah! that's right—a hot drink you're making? You're both wet to the skin, aren't you? I've rummaged up some clothes for you. I'll make you as comfortable as I can; but I'm only a poor woman——"

"You're a very kind one," said Volna, looking at the clothes she had brought.

"They are only rough, you know; but the best I can manage."

"Water's hot, Bob," cried Volna. "Get me a cloth to wipe these glasses," she said to the woman; and the moment her back was turned, Volna slipped the papers to me.

We mixed some brandy and water, and I insisted upon Volna drinking a little.

"I've set a candle in the room opposite for you," said the woman.

"Call me when you're ready, Peggy." And I went off with the clothes she had brought for me.

I had just completed the change when I heard a stealthy step in the passage. I was listening for it, indeed, and had not shut the door. Some one tried to shut it for me. I stopped that, and pulled it wide open. It was the man whose face I had seen before—long, thin, cadaverous, and cunning, with close-set, ferrety eyes.

"Come in," I said cheerfully.

He started very uneasily, and then mumbled: "I thought you didn't know it was open."

"All right. I suppose these are your things. I'm much obliged to you."

"They're my best," he answered. "You're welcome."

Now, he was some four inches shorter than I, whereas the clothes were quite long enough for me; and the discrepancy did not escape me, nor tend to lessen my suspicions.

He stood watching me silently as I finished the change and took out the contents of my pockets. But I was careful not to let him see that I had a weapon.

In the silence I could hear the rain streaming down.

"It's a fearful night," I said. "Your wife said you weren't at home."

"Just come in."

"You managed to keep dry."

He pretended not to hear me. "It won't last much longer. How did you come here?"

"We got off the road in the dark, and saw a light in your window."

"Strangers here, maybe?" I caught a quick, furtive glance, with a gleam of considerable interest in the shifty eyes.

"I don't think I've ever been in this particular spot before; but I shall know better when I see it by daylight. Anybody can get lost in the dark."

"Going far?"

"Out for a ride, and got caught in the storm. Will you see to the horses for me?"

"I have done so. Couple of good ones. One of them is nearly done up. You've come far?"

At that moment Volna opened the door of the other room and called me. She burst into a merry laugh at the sight of me, and I grinned back at her.

"You look as if you were made up as a peasant for theatricals," I said.

"I don't know what you're like. But I'm dry. Think of it, Bob, dry once more!"

I carried in my wet things, and they were soon steaming by the fire beside Volna's. The woman hustled about and put some black bread and vile cheese on the table, while the man stood fidgetting about sheepishly by the door.

"It's all I've got to eat," she deplored; "but I can make you some coffee."

"The very thing," said Volna.

"Fetch the coffee, Ivan," said the woman.

The man hesitated, glanced at her, and then shuffled away.

"Come on, Bob, I'm famished," cried Volna, sitting down and cutting some bread.

"Ivan says your horse is done up," said the woman. "You must be a long way from home."

"Farther than you think," replied Volna. "We're English."

"You didn't ride from England?" she asked stupidly.

"You dear soul, there's the sea between England and here."

"But you're strangers?"

"Some more bread, Bob?" And as Volna bent down to cut it she whispered in French to me: "She's asked that question a dozen times, trying to pump me all the time."

"Strangers?" I said to the woman. "Of course we are. Tourists. Don't know a soul for many a mile about here, and not a soul knows us. But you needn't be afraid. We can pay you." And I took out a handful of money and tossed a gold piece across to her.

It was worth the money to see the greedy, avaricious light that leaped in her eyes. But Volna looked puzzled and a little alarmed at this act of mine.

"What a time that man is getting the coffee!" the woman said. "I suppose he can't find it;" and she went out of the room.

"Why did you do that?" asked Volna.

"Why not? It was the answer she wanted, and it's quite a relief to be able to tell the truth."

"Do you suspect anything?"

"I think the man is a long time finding such a thing as coffee, and I wonder they don't keep it here with the rest of their eatables." And Volna showed that she understood me.

The two came back wrangling—she scolding him for his delay; he protesting he didn't know where she kept things. They were clumsy actors, however.

The woman then made some coffee and set it on the table. "I'm thinking where I'll put you to sleep," she said. "You can have our bed and welcome," she added to Volna; "but for your brother I'll have to make one up, somehow. You see, we're only poor folks. But we'll manage. Come, Ivan."

I was stirring my coffee, and put it to my lips as they went out; and the woman turned and saw me. This time instead of locking the door upon us, they left it ajar.

It was becoming as plain as print.

I set down the cup, untasted of course, and talked in a fairly loud tone about the kindness of the two, and how good the coffee was; and Volna taking her cue from me agreed.

Then we all but emptied the two cups into a jug and hid it away, and went on talking unconcernedly. Presently I stole to the door and listened. The two were in the upper part of the house.

Volna, I could see now, was beginning to grow nervous.

"It's all right. We can act much better than they, and there isn't a thing to fear."

Her brow wrinkled. "I think Peggy doesn't want to be left alone, Bob," she said.

"You'll have to make shift with that wooden settle; but you may go to sleep without a thought."

"What do you think they mean to do?"

"They've half done what they meant, and we shall soon know the rest. The coffee is drugged, of course, and they think we've drunk it. Now, lie down and just go off to sleep. I've dried my last three cigars, and am going to smoke one of them."

I settled her on the wooden bench, and, having lighted my cigar, rummaged about and found an oily rag, with which I cleaned my revolver very carefully, and reloaded it.

I then sat down by the fire, smoking and thinking and waiting. It was evident enough that we had got into the hands of some very ugly customers.

Somewhere between half an hour and an hour passed without a sound in the house. I had finished my cigar and tossed it away, and was gazing into the flickering embers of the fire, when I heard the stairs creak slightly. A glance showed me that Volna was asleep; a tribute this, indeed, to her trust in me.

I dropped my head as though I, too, were asleep, and breathed heavily. I was very curious to know what was to happen.

In a short while the door was pushed open noiselessly, and the woman put her head in. I had already set her down for the head of the firm, as the more courageous of the pair of rascals.

She looked at us both for some moments, then entered and crept toward Volna. Not daring to let her go too near, I shifted my position and grunted, as if uneasy in my sleep. This drew her attention to me, as I intended, and she stopped and stared at me.

Next she moved to the table and took up the two cups, one after another; glanced from them to us in turn; and, concluding that we had drunk the contents, set them down with a slight grunt of satisfaction.

The logs slipped in the fire at that moment with a shower of sparks. She started and took a quick step toward the door.

Thinking she was going, I moved, breathed very heavily, and blinked at her, as though almost overcome with sleep.

"I came for the light," she said, in a low voice. "Our candle's out."

For answer I nodded, waved my hand clumsily to signify she could take it, attempted to rise, and fell back in my chair, huddled together as if completely overcome with stupor.

She stood with the lamp in her hand, as if planning what to do next, a look of diabolical evil on her hideous face. Then slowly and cautiously she came toward me. Having satisfied myself that she had no knife or weapon, I shut my eyes, and let her hold the light close to my face. I could feel her breath as she bent forward to listen to my breathing.

After a moment she moved away and crossed to Volna, whom she examined with the same scrutiny. A low sigh of satisfaction escaped her as she turned away and went out of the room, carrying the lamp with her. I heard the stairs creak as she crept up them.

Then I woke Volna. "Don't be frightened. Pretend to be asleep. Something is going to happen. The woman has been in to make sure that we are asleep, and will no doubt be back in a moment."

I returned to my chair and waited, ready to resume my extremely uncomfortable position at a moment's notice.

Shortly afterward the stairs creaked again, more noisily this time, probably under the heavier weight of them both; but instead of entering the room the steps went along the passage. Then I heard sounds in the distance; just muffled, confused noises of knocking and stamping. What caused them I could not conjecture.

Soon after they had ceased the footsteps came again into the passage, and a moving streak of light showed through the door of our room. This time something weighty was set down with a heavy bump just outside the door; a most unaccountable rustling followed; and then the two whispered together. In the pause a pugent odor of paraffin came from the lamp they had.

All sorts of weird conjectures crowded into my thoughts as to the possible meaning of this development. Volna had heard it all, and looked at me in bewilderment. I motioned her to keep silence.

Another journey was made up the creaky staircase. It was the man who went, and while he was away, the woman looked in upon us. I saw to my surprise this time that she wore her bonnet.

As the man's tread was on the stairs again she drew back, and, in a whisper loud enough to reach us, said: "It's all right, you coward. They're both fast asleep. You can do it safely now. The man first, mind!"

The next moment the door was pushed wide open and they both entered stealthily.

CHAPTER IX.

A VERY TIGHT CORNER.

The suspense of the two or three moments which followed the entrance of the pair constituted an ordeal not to be forgotten. That Volna mastered herself sufficiently to pass through it without a sign or sound, was the greatest proof of her courage she could have given.

It was less trying for me. I had witnessed the woman's former visit, and, despite her ominous whisper to her husband, had come to the conclusion that no attempt was to be made on our lives. Moreover, I was armed. But Volna knew nothing of this. I had only been able to whisper a hurried and very indefinite warning to her, calculated, despite any assurance, to work up her fears to a high strain.

They stood still for some moments, the man slightly in front of his wife, who put down behind her the candle she was carrying. The faces of both then caught the red gleam from the embers of the fire; and so evil-looking a couple I hope never to see again.

The man's long, thin, cunning face

was strained and intense, and his narrow, treacherous eyes glanced from me to Volna, and back from Volna to me, as if in doubt which to attack first. Just behind him stood the tall, gaunt, and angular form of the woman, her eyes gleaming with excitement, her lips parted and drawn in a snarl to one side, and every line, cicatrice, and seam of her scarred, repulsive features brought into strong relief by the ruddy gleam of the log-fire. She looked a veritable hag of evil—utterly detestable, deadly, and loathsome.

"The man first," she whispered, jogging her accomplice.

He glanced half round to her irritably, and then I saw that he was carrying a length of cord.

He began to creep slowly toward me, until Volna, as she confessed afterward, could endure it no longer. She sprang up and called me.

In another moment I was on my feet; and before the two could recover from their astonishment, I sprang past them, slammed the door, and set my back against it.

"Now, perhaps, you'll tell me what this means?"

The woman was for fighting, and stood at bay like a beast, just robbed of its intended victim. But the man was of poorer stuff, and cowered ashen white and speechless.

"Mayn't we move about our own house?" asked the woman. "Ivan, if you're a man, you won't stand this."

But Ivan had no stomach for a fight. He clapped his hands to his face and sank into my chair by the fire. The hag looked his way and swore at him with a snarl of contempt.

"Come now, what does this mean?" I said again.

"It means that if you don't like it, you can clear out, the pair of you"—she turned fiercely on Volna—"coming with your lies about being lost, and wanting to rob poor and honest folk, and then trumping up a lying accusation! Who are you, I'd like to know."

Her assurance was as brazen as her courage was unquestionable. I own I was at a loss what to do.

"That won't do with me. Your one chance is to tell the truth," I said.

"You're a man, aren't you, to call a woman a liar? Do you hear that, Ivan?" and she went to him and shook him. "Get up, pig! Don't sit shaking there when you hear me abused by this thief of the night." She hauled him to his feet, and Volna took the opportunity of crossing to my side.

"You mustn't talk like that here," he said, with a sort of hang-dog manner.

"I'd rather talk to you than to the woman there. Now you——"

"You hear that, Ivan. Strike him for that. You deal with him and I'll look after the wench." She pushed him toward me, and seemed for the moment to infect him with some of her own desperate courage.

"If you don't like it, go," he said.

"No, they sha'n't go now," interrupted the fury. "We daren't let them go now, you fool! Go on."

He still hung back, however, and then she suddenly wrenched open a drawer and took out a formidable-looking chopper.

"Here, Ivan; now will you do it? Down with the man and leave the wench to me. It will be death if we don't do it and get away."

The remnants of his courage awoke when he felt the weapon in his hand; and I heard Volna catch her breath at the look which gradually stole into his beady, cruel eyes, as he looked at me.

Goaded by the woman's taunts, and the fear-thoughts which her words had started, he took a couple of stealthy steps toward me, while the woman went round the table to reach Volna.

Just as he was raising his weapon to rush at me, I whipped out my revolver and covered him.

"Drop that, you murderous devil!" I cried, in a ringing tone.

With a cry of fear he started back, and let the chopper fall on the brick floor. In a moment I had possession of it, and handed my pistol to Volna.

"If she moves, use it," I said.

But the sudden turning of the tables had knocked the fight even out of the virago of a woman. The man no long-

er counted. He stumbled back and cowered against the wall, getting as far away from me as possible, and just stared at me, beside himself with fright.

"Now we can talk," I said.

"We didn't mean anything," declared the woman. "We were only trying to frighten you so that we might get safely out of the room. I'm sure I tried to do all I could for you; giving you food and——"

"That'll do. Go to that end of the room." She obeyed me. "Now answer my questions. Why did you come stealing into the room just now—before this time?"

"I only wanted to see if you were all right and to fetch the lamp. I've done my best for you," she murmured, in a whining, canting, fawning tone.

"You won't answer, eh? Well, I'll give your man a chance. Now, you, tell me what was that rope for you brought in?"

The woman tried to reply, but I silenced her. The man glared at me speechless and helpless.

"Your only chance is to tell the truth. You were going to tie me up with it? Confess."

"No, no, no," he gasped through his pallid lips.

"You had two ropes—one for me and one for my sister here."

"No, no, no," he repeated.

"You know I speak the truth. But if you won't confess that, tell me why you drugged that coffee you gave me."

The woman broke out again, declaring by all the saints that I must be mad to ask such a question. The man only gazed stupidly at me in silence.

"Let him drink it, then," said Volna; and the woman's start at the shrewd suggestion told me that it had struck home.

"Yes, that's the test," I agreed readily. "Will you get that jug?"

Volna took out the jug and poured the coffee back into the cups.

They both watched her intently as she did this, turning now and then from her to me, with swift glances of speculative fear.

"Now, if this is not drugged or poisoned, drink it." I took one of the cups and held it toward the man. "Quick!" I cried, so sternly that he trembled. His eyes were everywhere except on my face, and his lips moved convulsively.

"Drink it, fool!" said the woman, with a sneer.

He stretched out his hand toward the cup, and then with a swift gesture struck at it and dashed it to the ground.

"I knew it. I need no more proof," I declared.

"I'll drink it," cried the woman, making a snatch at the cup on the table. But I caught her hand, and Volna took away the cup.

"No, no, that is for the police," I said.

At the mention of the police an angry oath leaped from her lips, and she strove desperately to wrench her hand from my grip to get the cup. I had to use some violence to thrust her back.

Foiled in the effort to destroy the traces of the drug, her rage completely mastered her; and, being unable to vent it upon us, she turned upon the man.

With a running accompaniment of abuse and reproaches as the cause of the trouble, she seized him and shook him till his teeth rattled like castanets, and then clouted and kicked him and tore at him with her nails like a fiend incarnate, until he fell huddled up on the floor, howling to her to stop.

Volna opened the door and went out to escape the din and repulsive sight, and then called me hurriedly.

In a moment the whole infernal scheme of the two was made clear. The heavy burden which we had heard set down outside the door, and which had so puzzled me, was explained, as well as the mysterious rustling which had set me wondering.

The one was a cask half full of petroleum; the other a huge heap of shavings, chips, and hay, ready saturated with petroleum.

"They meant to bind us in our sleep and fire the house. I did not think there could be such fiends," said Volna, trembling.

It was too obvious to question. The

heap of shavings laid ready for lighting told its own story; and, with the petroleum thrown into the room where we were to have been left bound and unconscious, nothing could have saved us.

Volna clung to my arm faint and cold with the horror of it. "Let us go," she whispered.

"That was why the woman was dressed to go out. I see it now. That fear of hers of the police—the noise we heard outside—they were expecting the police, and meant to fly on our horses. Such devils ought not to be allowed to escape."

But it was obvious that we dared not run the risk of denouncing them.

"Let us go," implored Volna again. "The very air of the place makes me faint and ill."

I went back into the room.

"I have found out all your infernal scheme," I said. "Get out of here, and keep out of my sight, lest I take the law in my own hands."

The man was seemingly afraid to move; so I dragged him to his feet, hauled him to the door, and flung him down in the passage. "Up-stairs with you, and if I catch so much as a glimpse of you, I'll shoot you like the murderous skunk you are!"

He crawled away from my feet and slunk up the creaking staircase, shaking in every limb and casting frightened glances behind him.

"What are you going to do?" asked the woman, coming to the door.

"Hold your tongue!" I thundered. "Go to the villain you egged on to do this thing. Quick!"

She was scared by my rage, and went without another word.

"Shall I change?" asked Volna.

I nodded. "And bring me my things. I'll stop on guard here."

I heard the two muttering and wrangling in the room above; but neither made any attempt to come down; and in some few minutes we were ready.

"We'll go together and get the horses," I said to Volna; and was in the act of opening the door when I started involuntarily as some one beat a loud peremptory summons on the panel.

"Open the door, there; open!" called a voice.

Volna started and clutched my arm. "What shall we do?"

If it was the police, we were caught like rats in a trap.

"We must brazen it out," I said.

"The papers?" she whispered. The knocking was repeated more loudly and insistently than before. "Open, there, at once, I say!"

"See if there's fire enough to burn them."

She ran back into the room.

"Who is there?" I called.

"The police. Open or we shall break in."

To show hesitation would be fatal. So I unfastened the door and threw it open.

At that moment, Volna came back and shook her head.

Two men entered. "You are our prisoners," cried the first-comer. "If you resist, the consequences will be on your heads."

"We don't resist. I'm glad you've come."

They seized and held us both, the man who took me snatching the revolver, which was still in my hand.

"Ah! a police weapon," he said significantly, and showed it to his companion, who appeared to be in command.

"Search them both for any more weapons," came the order.

"Wait a moment! There is a mistake here," I said.

"You've made it, then, in letting us net you here so easily." And they both laughed.

"What is the charge against us?" I asked.

It was about as tight a corner as fate in an ill-natured mood could have devised for us.

TO BE CONTINUED.

The Philosophy of Raw-dog

By T. Jenkins Hains

Author of "The Black Barque," "The Wind-Jammers," Etc.

The South Sea trader is entitled to all the fun he can get out of life; but in this amusing story Mr. Hains tells how a gay trader and his crew came off second best in a deal with a cannibal chief

E had a peculiar name, and we never could quite pronounce it. Perhaps we were an illiterate crew, for we were nothing but the choicest kind of South Sea traders. We called him "Raw-dog," for that sounded something like it, and then, besides, he was a cannibal, a real, self-confessed cannibal from across the Straits, and he had boasted quite frequently of the number of his enemies he had dined upon.

Slade, our chief mate, knew him very well, and it was through this friendship we were enabled to trade at his most inaccessible island. We didn't get much, to be sure, but we tried to get the best he had at a very low figure—beads, mostly, and cheap iron knives.

Raw-dog soon became our regular visitor while we lay close to the land, and his worship was paddled out to the ship by six as good-looking girls as any man not a cannibal need wish to possess.

The chief had attended the mission for several years, and could speak and understand English; it was, therefore, useless to try to get the best of such a well-educated and powerful potentate. When a proposed trade didn't please him, he showed a couple of rows of teeth which had been filed to sharp points until they resembled a tiger's, and waved the skipper aside, announcing that there was nothing doing.

The only way to do really successful trading with the natives of the Fiji group was to be hospitable. The chiefs must be brought to a healthy, or, rather, unhealthy, state of mind, and to accomplish this, our skipper resorted to rum. Rum seldom failed to produce results.

With Raw-dog it had various effects, sometimes causing him to give away his entire archipelago, and at others making him suspicious and harboring a half-hidden desire to eat the skipper. It always made the chief talkative, and it was worth something to hear him hold forth upon the ways of white men. Some of his holdings were true enough, after a manner of looking at it, but, at the same time, the chief's reasoning was of a startling character. He had a peculiar and direct way of reasoning which for originality was equal to any found in the South Seas.

The old man was querulous on this voyage, and instead of giving the chief the best rum aboard, he made the mistake of diluting it with a mixture of turpentine and tar, which, although it increased the quantity without adding greatly to the expense, did not improve its quality.

Its effect was soon apparent upon Raw-dog, and the copra we were trying to persuade him to produce was not forthcoming. He balked—balked suddenly and definitely, and was as implacable as a tiger shark.

The bark was lying offshore in a few fathoms, the coral reef outside of us breaking the weight of the sea that fell upon the barrier. It was a fairly good harbor, the bottom soft enough to get the anchor-fluke into, but the entrance difficult except with a fair wind.

On both sides of the break in the barrier-reef the surf fell heavily, even in the calmest weather, and the current setting either in or out with great rapidity made it necessary to keep rapid headway upon the ship. To miss-stay meant to strike, and to strike meant the loss of the ship, for the coral was pointed and hard. Two or three drops upon one of those points would poke a hole through any vessel's side, and there was no dry-dock within two thousand miles.

And so there we lay, day after day, the old man fretting and fuming and Raw-dog coming aboard every little while with a serene smile and six handsome wives, to chat about the weather and philosophize as was his custom.

"Mission man, he says, do same to neighbor—youself—as youself do me," said the chief judicially to the old man every time a bargain was raised between them. "I need many thing—you have him. Give me all you have—I give you all I have—not part. Me generous—I give all; so must you give all—and more besides. Why? Because you Christian man, me cannibal and heathen. If you not so tough, I eat you."

And then he would grin in his diabolical manner, showing those sharpened teeth. He had humor.

And then the old man would rage around and curse him in a truly Christian fashion, all of which had no more effect upon his worship than so much flattery. In fact, words seemed to have very little meaning indeed to the chief. He had ideas, and he believed in many things he saw, but very few things he was told. Of course he was not always told the truth. It was too precious an article to fling around loose among savages.

"It's no use," said Slade, one morning, after a day's fuming about the deck. "We've got to make a bargain in something or go out of business."

"What kin we do?" bellowed the old man, walking fore and aft and shaking his fist at the towering mountains on the shore. "What kin we do with sech a chief as that, hey? I want to know."

Slade looked about the vessel for a few moments, and appeared to be in deep thought. This was his habit when he had something new to tell, and I knew he had already thought out what he had to say many hours before. "There's natives wanted pretty badly on the continent," he finally said significantly.

"What of it?" growled the old man.

"Blackbirding is not a bad idea, hey?"

"Hanging, if you get caught," said the old man shortly.

"It's death from starvation if we don't," said the mate quietly.

"We couldn't get fifty men from that chief," said the old man, paying more attention.

"We might get some of his women, then," said Slade. "He's got a lot of them, and we might make a deal with him for a hundred or two. They'll be worth five hundred apiece if we land them right. They need women mighty badly to the westward."

"He'll never do it," grunted the old man finally, and resumed his walk.

"Well, by hookey! we can take 'em, take 'em, anyways! What's to stop us making a deal with him, and then take twice as many as we bargain for?"

"Leave it to me," said the old man, brightening up. "It isn't a bad idee, after all."

Slaving, of course, was out of the question. There hadn't been any of it done in the archipelago for half a century, but there were ways of making contracts with chiefs that would enable a planter to keep his people for ten years or more at a wage which amounted to nothing more than a mere living, simply paying for their keep and getting their labor during that period.

Slade came forward and called the watch together, getting the men on deck. They came grumblingly, the three below rubbing their eyes and making a protest at having been turned out before their time. There were six men in the crew, three in each watch, besides a Kanaka cook, who acted sometimes as interpreter. The old man had dealt so much among the natives that

he pretty well understood their language, and as for Slade, he was the quickest man at pantomime that ever trod a trader's deck. He could ask for a drink of rum or a bunch of copra with equal facility, and by no more than a few passes of the hands.

There was a little shock-headed fellow in the watch—my watch, for I was second mate—who was pretty slow to grasp things, and although I never troubled him, Slade used to chase him about a bit with a belaying-pin, just to keep him warm. We were an all-American crew, and, therefore, got along very well without any of the rough-house usual on square-head trading-ships.

"It's this way, boys," said the mate, when all had grouped to hear the news. "There is nothing doin' unless we do it, see? The old man wants all hands to go and get married."

Here he paused for a moment to see the effect of the announcement, and, strange enough, every one of those beggars smiled. Not a comprehensive grin, such as one would expect, but a vacant, unintelligent smile.

"Yes," said the mate, "it's the old man's wish that we all get unto ourselves handsome wives. The old chief, Raw-dog, will furnish the women, and the old man will pay for them in rum, rascality, or anything else the old cannibal will take."

Five of those men fairly shouted for joy. The only man who didn't seem to rise to the occasion was the little shock-headed fool, Jones. He looked queer about the eyes and his jaw fell.

"I ain't never been married, Mr. Slade," said he meekly, "an' I am a bit dubious about it. Have the banns been published yet?"

"Banns!" roared the mate. "Banns! What's them?"

And those five Christians roared.

When Raw-dog came aboard that day, the skipper was as sweet as a sapodilla.

"I've come to your way o' thinking," said he, grasping the old rascal's hand and leading him below to some of the real rum and water he kept for himself and the custom-house officers. "I've come to believe you are right about trading. Them women you have air worth quite something. We all want to marry some o' them an' take 'em away to the continent to live like true Christians. What d'ye say? How much for a wife apiece, one for every man-jack of us?"

"What? Don't you men not have wife?" asked the chief.

"Mebbe one or two of 'em has; but what has that to do with it? Ain't I a-goin' to pay you right for 'em?" snapped the skipper.

"Right, right," said the chief. "If you have wife, you get more wife. The mission say that whatever you got of, you get more of; what you don't got nothing of you get it taken from you, hey?"

"And quite true," said the old man, eying the philosopher keenly.

"You want more wife, then—how much you give for fine young wife?"

"Two gallons of good rum," said the skipper carelessly.

"You talk foolis' talk," said the chief, rising and starting toward the companionway. But Slade stopped him.

"Three gallons," said the mate.

The chief waved him aside.

"One keg apiece," snapped the skipper.

The old chief turned suddenly and stretched forth his hand. "I take it," was all he said.

And so every man aboard the vessel was told to tog out to go ashore and select his girl, while the skipper drew up a paper and prepared to go to the mission with it to get it signed. The affair was to be orderly and carried out in proper form. The number of women was left blank on purpose so that it might be filled out afterward, after we had landed our haul. Of course the women themselves had to be consulted, but who ever heard of a native woman refusing to marry a white man?

That evening all was in readiness for the festival. The ship was hove short so that we might make a getaway at a moment's notice, and all was fixed for as clever a piece of "blackbirding" as

ever a real, true trader wished to pull off.

A small bunch of money was made ready for the man at the mission, and the papers were arranged so that all that was necessary to give us a clean bill was the "O. K." of the great chief.

Slade, with a true sportsman's instinct, arranged for the marriage-festival. The women were to be in two large pavilions, the young and good-looking separate from the old and infirm. There were a lot of old women near the mission. It always seems that when women get old they go to a mission. Slade noted this fact and took precautions accordingly. We were to get only the young and vigorous, for old women would not bring their weight in salt water anywhere we might take them.

In the separate pavilions we could take the ones who would be willing to come along, and then, under cover of the night, we would run aboard the others and do all we could to make them as comfortable as possible and persuade to go to the mainland to work for the rest of their lives and become good Christians. If there were any real objectors among them, we would hastily put them ashore, fill out the papers for the rest, and get to sea. We would not try kidnaping.

As for the ethical questions involved, we did not go into them at all. The native women all through the archipelago were notoriously good-looking, shiftless, and absolutely without morals. Yet withal they were a devoted lot, unselfish and affectionate in most matters. Besides, they all dearly loved adventure —and white men.

We came ashore that evening, bringing our rum and other articles for trading with us. Raw-dog insisted upon tasting the liquor before he would hear of business, and after the old man had allowed him to sample everything we had, he conducted us to the native settlement near the mission, where we were to select our women.

All hands had been instructed how to act: how, after the affair had gradually developed during the night, they were to get the women from the pavilion into groups and entice them aboard the vessel under cover of the darkness; then they were to close the hatches, and in the morning we would count heads and offer to put all ashore who would not listen to the gilded arguments of Slade and the skipper.

The night was dark as pitch, but as we neared the village we saw that it was lit up by many torches. Women singing native songs in the distance lent a melody to the scene. Raw-dog, attired in a plug-hat of ancient make, probably given him by some generous shipmaster, led the way to a large fire over which roasted a fine pig. All around were signs of festivity, and in a short time we were surrounded by both men and women of the tribe.

At first Slade was for getting right into business, but it was soon evident that the chief would not act that way. There had to be all the ceremony due the occasion, and the prospective bridegrooms were to be looked to. The old man, Slade, and myself were exempt as officers of the ship. All the hands were eligible except the Kanaka cook, who was left aboard to take care of things until we came back.

We ate of the pig and drank of the rum, and enjoyed the evening as only sailors can who have been penned up aboard a ship for days. Some of the men acted too hilarious, but as it was their wedding-night the old man overlooked their levity and rather encouraged them to drink more. Then, after eating and singing and dancing, the papers were brought forth, and the bargain struck between the chief and the old man for the wives for his crew.

The shock-headed fellow, Jones, was the first to be offered. He still demurred strongly at the proceedings, but the gibes of his shipmates kept him up to the mark until they plied him with liquor enough to drown any scruples he might have had other than a natural bashfulness.

He was led to the pavilion of beauty to select his spouse, while Slade brought forth his keg of rum with ostentation, and placed it before Raw-dog, marking,

as it did, the first payment in the transaction. It was quite dark in the pavilion, but Jones managed to pick out a handsome girl who put her arm about his neck and smiled her acknowledgment of the compliment done her. They stood forth in the firelight, and we gave them three rousing cheers.

Jones made a break for cover, and in his befuddled state ran for the pavilion distinctly set apart by Slade for the incligible women. The girl was quickly after him, laughing and calling in his wake. They disappeared, and the next man, a big, red-headed Irish-looking chap, stood forth for his spouse. His luck was with him, also, and a fine big girl was allotted to him as a helpmate.

The rest soon followed, while the old man, led by the chief, made his way toward the mission for the necessary finishing of the papers.

An hour with the man at the mission made things satisfactory, and as the night was now well advanced, we made our way to the shore to go aboard.

The sounds of revelry were floating over the quiet harbor, and we were well aware that the good-humored crew were aboard with a large crowd. The men met us at the gangway, and Jones insisted that they were all well below. All hands were too full of rum to work, and it remained for us to make sail and get away. Jones repeated over and over that there were a hundred souls below hatches, and they were as happy as any women on earth.

We stood forth and made our offing before daylight. Then the old man ordered the hatches opened and our prizes brought on deck. The men obeyed grudgingly, but Slade woke them up some and we peered over the hatchcombings for the dusky beauties.

The first one to awaken and show signs of returning consciousness was a lady of about eighty. She was thin and decrepit, and could hardly crawl up the ladder from the 'tween decks.

"Holy smoke!" said Slade, "whose choice is this?"

"That's Jones' own," said the big sailor; "mine's young and pretty."

The next girl that appeared was not much under seventy. She was fat and toothless. The old man came forward and peered down.

"Gee whiz!" said he, "what have we here?"

"Looks like an old ladies' home broke loose," said Slade, mopping his brow. "How the deuce——"

But he was interrupted by the appearance of fifteen more ladies whose aggregate years would almost make a thousand, and who smiled calmly and happily at their admirers.

"Sink me, but we've hit the wrong crowd!" said Slade. "How did it happen?"

The big sailor with red hair rubbed his eyes a little and scratched his head. "You see," said he, "the orders was to get the whole crowd in the pavilion. We followed Jones—an' got 'em."

"That you did, for sure!" snapped the skipper. "Every one o' them over sixty! Do you think any one would want 'em, Slade?"

"Barrin' my mother, I never took much stock in old women—no matter how pleasant they be," said the mate, with a grin.

"What'll we do?" groaned the old man. "Think of all that rum gone!"

"Do!" yelled Slade. "We won't do anything but put 'em ashore as quick as we can. Do! We won't do anything—we're done."

"Run under the land and put them ashore in the small-boat. I won't run in through the reef again."

"But I don't think they will go," I said. "They won't want to leave the ship."

"Oh, Lord! Oh, Lord! It's too bad," groaned the old man, going aft.

By noon we had landed them, much against their wishes, and stood away from the unlucky island.

Shock-headed Jones approached the mate when the watch turned to.

"What I want to know, sir, is, am I married or not, sir?" said he, standing unsteadily and holding to the fife-rail.

"I don't know. Better ask the old man. Why?"

"Well, sir, if it's no worse'n that, sir—why, I'm ready ag'in, sir."

The Adventures of Felix Boyd

By Scott Campbell

Author of "Below the Dead Line," Etc.

IX.—A TRANSATLANTIC CRIME

(A Complete Story)

JIMMIE COLEMAN never had seen him with such a look on his face.

The hair of Mr. Felix Boyd was in amazing disorder. Tiny drops of perspiration glistened on his brow, cheeks, and neck. His eyes were dilated and preternaturally bright. His thin, clean-cut features were pale, drawn, and haggard, wearing as ugly an expression of determination as one would care to view. He sat at the desk in his private office, with his coat and vest discarded, his shirt-sleeves rolled to his elbows, and his collar and cravat cast upon the floor some feet away.

"Boyd!" exclaimed Coleman, halting on the threshold. "What's the matter with you this morning?"

Hearing the door open, Felix Boyd had glanced up sharply from an accumulation of newspapers, telegrams, and memoranda that covered his desk.

"Come in!" he snapped impatiently. "Don't stand staring at me like that. You're no lay-figure with glass eyes."

The Central Office man suppressed an inclination to grin.

"You're in fine good humor, Felix," said he, taking a chair.

"So you would be," retorted Boyd, "if your brain had been in a riot for eighteen hours."

"Under pressure, eh?" queried Coleman, glancing curiously at the desk. "Had your breakfast?"

"Had nothing! I've not been out of this room, hardly out of this chair, since yesterday noon."

"What!"

"You heard me."

"What is the occasion for such strenuous application as——"

"A fat question, Jimmie!" interrupted Boyd, with a dive for his pipe amid a heap of loose tobacco and dead ashes on the window-sill, an unusual lack of neatness that spoke volumes. "The occasion is a case that I'm bound to ferret to the bottom. The time is limited, however, and that's the devil of it."

Coleman drew his chair nearer the speaker. He saw now that Boyd had been under extraordinary mental tension, that his every nerve was strained to the limit, that his remarkable detective instinct was under harrowing stimulation, and that he was laboring over a problem that threatened to baffle even his rare genius. No less a cause could so have wrought upon Mr. Felix Boyd.

"Can I help you, Felix?" he asked more gravely.

Boyd shook his head and tossed away the match with which he had lighted his pipe.

"I think not, Jimmie," said he, puffing nervously. "I hope I begin to see a ray of light in the darkness—but I'm not sure—not sure."

This series began in the February issue. The back numbers can be obtained through any newsdealer. Price ten cents each.

"Does my presence hinder or annoy you?"

"No, no, Jimmie, not now. I've about decided what to do—the only thing I can do," was the jerkily rendered answer. "I must get nearer the parties involved. I must see them with my eyes—my own eyes, Jimmie!"

"You pique my curiosity," growled Coleman. "What is this case?"

"You know all about it, Jimmie, or about part of it," said Boyd, wiping the perspiration from his face. "The newspapers have been full of it."

"Not the Hopedale robbery!" exclaimed Coleman quickly. "You don't mean to say that you have dipped into that."

"Drawn into it, Jimmie, comes nearer," amended Boyd, with the shadow of a smile on his thin lips. "Lord Hopedale has implored me to aid him."

"Lord Hopedale! Say, you're all right in your belfry, aren't you? Do you know what you're saying, Felix?"

"Certainly."

"But Lord and Lady Hopedale are at this moment on the ocean, bound for America—for New York City."

"Yes, and very nearly in port."

"Then how can you have been engaged by Hopedale?"

"Bah!" Boyd curtly interrupted. "You are perplexed over nothing, Jimmie. Do you forget the wireless telegraph?"

"Oh!"

"I have been in communication with Lord Hopedale since yesterday noon, when I received the first wireless message from him. At the suggestion of Captain Clay, of the Cunard liner, who is a personal friend, Lord Hopedale begged me to undertake an investigation of this case. It is a most extraordinary one."

The eyes of the Central Office man were open wide. "I should say as much," he commented, with his habitual growl. "A case investigated across several thousand miles of the Atlantic must be an extraordinary one."

"No, only fifty miles," corrected Boyd, laying aside his pipe. "Lord and Lady Hopedale now are within fifty miles of New York. The steamer should arrive in port this very afternoon. That's why my time is so limited. I've been in wireless communication with Captain Clay and Lord Hopedale since the steamer was two hundred miles off the coast."

"It's amazing, Felix, all the same," muttered Coleman. "Can't you let me into it with you? The unusual character of it nettles my interest. What have you made of the case?"

Boyd shrugged his shoulders, smiling faintly, and glanced at his watch. It was precisely nine o'clock. The sunlight of the clear October morning was beaming through the windows of his Union Square office, out of which he had not stirred since noon the previous day, having neither eaten nor slept.

It was then that he had received the first wireless message from Lord Hopedale, two hundred miles away on an ocean liner, and with the help of his office-boy, Terry Gowan, whom he had kept fairly flying between the telegraph headquarters and his own, Felix Boyd had since been maintaining this remarkable intercourse with the Englishman, and persistenly delving deeper into the mystifying circumstances of the case on which he was so curiously engaged.

"What have I made of it, Jimmie?" he said, reverting with knit brows to the telegrams and memoranda on his desk. "Well, well, I am not sure that I can tell you at present, for the conflicting results of my deductions are so infernally perplexing that I fail to see clearly as yet the—I suppose you read the newspapers of two weeks ago, eh?" he abruptly broke off to ask.

"Yes, of course."

"Then you know about the robbery committed in London at that time?"

"No, not the details of it," protested Coleman. "I have only a general idea. I never dip deep into transatlantic crimes."

"This one, or all that yet is known about it, may be briefly stated," said Boyd, with nervous impatience. "Lady Hopedale is an American girl, as you know, the only daughter of our multi-

millionaire railway magnate of this city, Jonas Calhoun Fiske. She married Lord Hopedale—or his lordship's title, Heaven only knows which—about a year ago. Two weeks ago the couple, then in their London home, began making arrangements to return to New York to visit my lady's parents."

"Yes, yes, I read all about that," growled Coleman. "The toadyism of the American press over it is nauseating."

"And you read, no doubt, of the mysterious disappearance of Lady Hopedale's most valuable diamonds at that time. Scotland Yard still is up in the air over it. On the level, too, it presents a curious problem."

"What were the mystifying circumstances?"

"As simple as their solution is obscure," said Boyd, with an asperity characteristic of him when perplexed by a difficult case. "The robbery occurred just two weeks ago. Lady Hopedale had returned from a swell afternoon reception, at which she had worn her most valuable jewels. Early in the evening her maid, one Mary Dunn, helped her disrobe in her own private room, in which there was a small, secret cupboard in one of the walls, of which only the mistress and maid were informed. Not even Lord Hopedale knew of its existence. It had been cleverly constructed back of the oak wainscot by Lady Hopedale herself, and in it she was in the habit of hiding her most valuable diamonds, leaving her less expensive jewelry to the care of her husband."

"What was her motive in retaining the diamonds?" Coleman demanded.

"It is stated in explanation," replied Boyd, "that Lady Hopedale has a mania for fine diamonds; that she delights in having them near her; and that frequently in the night, being afflicted with insomnia, she leaves her bed to fondle and admire them. Be that as it may, Jimmie, her lost diamonds were superb, worth nearly twenty thousand dollars; and for the reasons stated, she contrived the secret concealment for them in her own private apartment."

"A concealment known only to herself and her maid, eh?"

"So it is emphatically stated."

"Who committed the robbery?"

"That's a difficult question to answer, Jimmie. When attending her mistress early that evening, Mary Dunn put the several diamond ornaments into their customary hiding-place. Lady Hopedale saw her do so, and she herself made sure that each piece was there, and that a small movable portion of the oak panel, which covered the place and was operated with a hidden spring, was securely closed."

"I see," nodded Coleman.

"Lady Hopedale remained in her room all of that evening, reading," continued Boyd. "Her maid was absent till after half-past ten, and upon her return Lady Hopedale retired. After dismissing her maid, Lady Hopedale took a fancy to view her diamonds, and she opened the secret cupboard to get them. Jimmie, the entire lot had gone."

"Gone!"

"Vanished as if into air."

"Who had been in the room?"

"Not a person except Lady Hopedale and her maid."

"So far as you know!" growled Coleman.

"Precisely."

"Where was Lord Hopedale?"

"At the House of Lords until midnight. He did not dine at home, and his absence explains his wife's seclusion in her room."

"Stop a bit!" exclaimed Coleman, with more churlishness than usual. "There must be some clue to be found. At what hour did Lady Hopedale return from the reception?"

"About seven o'clock."

"When did she remove her diamonds?"

"Soon after her return."

"Were they at once concealed?"

"Within a very few minutes."

"And she did not again leave her room?"

"So it is stated, Jimmie, and her word is absolutely reliable."

"What time did Mary Dunn go out?"

"About eight o'clock," replied Boyd,

glancing at his notes. "It has been positively proved that she was met at the house door by a young man, one Jerry Conroy, and that she went to a theater with him and another of the house-servants; also that she left the theater during the last act, and came directly home."

"Who established those facts?"

"The Scotland Yard detectives."

"Have they since been at work on the case?"

"Yes, half a score of them."

"Has their search been vain?"

"Absolutely vain."

"Was the hiding-place thoroughly examined? The jewelry may have dropped down back of the wainscot."

"Utterly impossible," declared Boyd. "The London detectives covered all of the ground you have suggested, Jimmie, and they covered it effectually."

Coleman stared perplexedly for a moment, then began again.

"What about Jerry Conroy, the young man who escorted the maid to the theater?"

"Nothing against him can be learned."

"Had he previously met the girl and been out with her?"

"Yes, several times."

"How long has Mary Dunn been in Lady Hopedale's employ?"

"About six weeks."

"Humph! that's a short time to have trusted her with so important a secret," snarled Coleman. "Was she well recommended?"

"So it is stated," nodded Boyd. "She was vouched for, too, by Lady Hopedale's previous maid, who left service to be married at that time."

"Well, well, either the mistress or the maid must have removed the gems, or some third person must have entered Lady Hopedale's room unseen by her," declared Coleman, with an aggressive head-shake. "Did Lady Hopedale fall asleep while reading that evening?"

"I am told that she is very sure that she did not," replied Boyd. "I asked the same question, Jimmie, by wireless telegraph."

"Did you get all of your information by that means?"

"Not all, Jimmie, but most of it," replied Boyd, pointing to the huge batch of telegrams. "Since yesterday noon I have been in frequent communication with Lord Hopedale and Captain Clay."

Again the Central Office man stared perplexedly at the laden desk. The case was, indeed, a puzzler. Yet he knew Scotland Yard nearly as well as he knew Mulberry Street, and he knew that the London detectives must have left no stone unturned to solve the mystery. Presently he reverted quickly to Boyd, and abruptly demanded:

"Why did Lord Hopedale telegraph you from midocean? What earthly good did he think you could do on this side?"

Boyd's eyes took on a curious squint.

"Lord and Lady Hopedale, accompanied only by Mary Dunn and his lordship's valet, embarked for New York last Wednesday morning," said he.

"Well?"

"Next morning, Jimmie, the maid was missing."

"Missing!" echoed Coleman amazedly.

"Yes. Her shawl was found on the promenade-deck, where she was seen late Wednesday evening, moodily gazing over the port-rail. She has not been seen since. The night was cloudy and very dark, with a considerable sea running, and her disappearance under such circumstances suggests three questions."

"Namely?"

"Did Mary Dunn accidentally fall overboard unseen? Did she, for some unknown reason, possibly under an impulse of remorse, deliberately commit suicide? Or was Mary Dunn foully cast into the sea by some person who knew her to be guilty of the robbery, who knew that she had the stolen diamonds in her possession, and who relieved her of them and flung her overboard?"

Coleman was staggered by these suggestions, and his ready tongue was for the moment silent.

Felix Boyd drew forward in his

chair and laid his finger on the knee of the Central Office man.

"It was the mysterious disappearance of this girl, Jimmie," he added, "that led Captain Clay to advise Hopedale to appeal to me by wireless telegraph from the arriving liner."

Coleman sat silent for a long time, vainly striving to measure the full significance of these last disclosures.

"I hardly know what to make of it," Boyd continued musingly. "I have instructed Captain Clay to say nothing of the fact that he and Hopedale have been in communication with me, and I have ordered them to thoroughly search the ship, to be absolutely sure whether a girl even remotely resembling Mary Dunn is not among the passengers of either class. It's possible her disappearance may be part of a well-arranged plot."

"What are you waiting now for?" asked Coleman suddenly.

"For a message informing me of the result of their search."

"And when that arrives——"

"When that arrives," finished Boyd, "I shall be ready to move; ready to test my several theories and deductions; ready to grapple with this affair as I now see it. If their answer is what I now expect, if the result of their search —hark! there's a step in the outer office. It should be—hello, Terry! the message —the wireless message! It is here."

With cheeks and eyes aglow, Terry Gowan had rushed into the private office, bearing in his hand the impatiently awaited communication.

Boyd snatched it from him and quickly tore open the cover. He had started up from his chair, and was trembling visibly. It was as if upon this last wireless message hung the result of his prolonged, tireless study of the case; as if its delayed delivery had been the one cause of all his nervous irritation and impatience. One glance of his dilated eyes took in the single line:

No girl on board resembling Mary Dunn.

Boyd tossed the message to Coleman, then turned to his desk. On a telegraph blank he hurriedly wrote the following brief response, addressed to Captain Clay:

Will board you off Sandy Hook from revenue cutter. Disclose nothing. Leave all to me. BOYD.

Then he arose from his desk with a deliberation that caused Coleman to stare with amazement. The last sign of his recent excitement had vanished. His drawn, white face was coldly calm, yet as hard as flint.

"Send this without delay, Terry; it's the last," he said curtly. "Away with you!"

The boy already was rushing out of the office, as he had rushed into it less than thirty seconds before.

Such remarkable despatch plainly indicated to Coleman that Felix Boyd had anticipated the message just received, that his response was ready in his mind, and his immediate designs matured. He was about to speak; but Boyd checked him with a gesture and hurriedly began to make his toilet.

"No questions now, Jimmie!" he exclaimed. "Yet you may see the hunt to a finish, if you like, and be in at the death—barring the fox eludes us! I shall be ready in a moment. There's a cab awaiting us at the door, and I have held the revenue cutter at the Barge Office pier till that last message should arrive. By noon we should be aboard the arriving Cunarder, and then—well, well, we shall see! You'll come, won't you? Get a move on, old chap! We have no time to waste."

Mr. Felix Boyd already had seized his light overcoat and was hastening from his office.

The Central Office man followed him without a word.

II.

The calm expanse of the Atlantic was like a vast, blue mirror reflecting the azure of the cloudless October sky—cloudless if you except the volumes of dense black smoke that rose from the stacks of the huge Cunader when she made way again and left the diminutive revenue cutter to fall astern.

Fore and aft, from every vantage-point, the throng of passengers had gazed and wondered. Yet in the main saloon and about the promenade-deck it was quickly whispered that customs officers and reporters were coming aboard, and with them a certain noted detective, engaged by wireless telegraph to inquire into the recent loss of Lady Hopedale's cherished diamonds and the strange disappearance of her ladyship's maid.

It was with an air of indifference, however, that Mr. Felix Boyd mounted the ladder to the deck of the liner, closely followed by the Central Office man. He was one of the last to leave the revenue cutter, and Captain Clay, who had come down from the bridge to receive them, was obviously relieved when he finally appeared.

"Detective Coleman, of the Central Office," remarked Boyd, with no observable interest in the passengers thronging near-by. "Jimmie, shake hands with Captain Clay, an old friend of mine."

"Glad to know you, Detective Coleman."

"Had a comfortable passage, captain?" asked Felix.

"Barring the first night out, Mr. Boyd."

"Calm enough now, isn't it? The sea is like glass."

"Calm enough, yes! But time is of value, Mr. Boyd. We shall reach the dock before you can complete——"

"The investigation that brought me here?" queried Boyd.

"Exactly."

"Oh, plenty of time," Boyd rejoined. "I shall presently take the full measure of the case, I am quite convinced. I presume that Lord and Lady Hopedale are waiting to receive me, and that—ah, I beg pardon, sir!"

In turning, he had collided with a man almost at his elbow, one who had pressed nearest among the group of passengers thronging the way to the promenade-deck.

The stranger was a tall, dark-featured man, very well dressed, and obviously of French extraction. He quickly drew aside, bowing and rubbing his slender white hands, while he rejoined with obsequious haste:

"Don't mention it! The fault was mine, sir; all mine. I had no reason to be in your way. I beg you'll excuse me."

Boyd nodded and smiled agreeably, then moved on, making his way to the promenade-deck.

Presently he discovered, amid a group of reporters near the entrance to the grand stairway, the distinguished couple he was seeking—there was no mistaking them.

Hopedale was a short, stocky man of thirty, clad in a gray woolen suit, with a cap to match. He wore no overcoat or gloves, and one would hardly have picked him out for a British peer. His tall, strikingly handsome wife made up for what he lacked in fashionable attire, however; and she then was talking vivaciously with half a dozen reporters, much as if the loss of her diamonds and maid had sunk to secondary importance when compared with the acquirement of press notices worthy of her distinction.

Boyd paused for a few moments, with Captain Clay still at his elbow.

"First let her have her say to the newspaper boys," he said easily. "By the way, Clay, where is their stateroom located?"

Captain Clay pointed over the semi-circular corridor leading to the deck suites.

"The third on this side," he quietly rejoined.

"Who occupies the second?"

"Two maiden ladies named Kane. They are returning from missionary work in Armenia."

"And the fourth?" inquired Boyd, with an indifferent display of interest.

"The fourth suite is occupied by Mr. Moses Fayal and his wife, with a maid and infant child."

"Know him well?"

"Not at all. He is traveling-agent for some French house, I've been told."

"Ah, I see."

"That is he, Boyd, trying to amuse his baby," added Clay, with voice low-

ered. "The squalling brat has not stopped yelling since we cleared—the devil take him!"

Boyd laughed lightly, and even the gloomy Central Office man grinned.

"Madame Fayal, too, has been sick the whole passage. Special stewardess, meals in her room, no end of bother—darn such passengers, anyway!"

Boyd gazed indifferently at the man mentioned—the same with whom he had collided a few minutes before.

A little apart from the passengers, customs officers, and reporters thronging the saloon-deck, Fayal was striving vainly to quiet a fretful infant who struggled frantically in the arms of the nurse. With absurd cluckings and endearments, with grimaces and gestures nothing short of ludicrous, he was instructing the refractory youngster to shake a fancy wooden rattle, which the child presently struck so violently to the deck that it nearly rolled overboard, a mishap prevented only by Boyd quickly thrusting out his foot to check it.

As quick as a flash, with a leap that would have done credit to a professional jumper, the Frenchman attempted to recover the pretty plaything.

Boyd picked it up and handed it to him, remarking with a smile:

"A close call for the baby's toy. Another foot, sir, and it would have fallen into the sea."

Fayal accepted it with a bow.

"So it would, sir," he quickly rejoined. "I'm greatly obliged to you."

"Oh, not in the least."

"Children are a nuisance in such places. Here, Marie, take him to his mother! She is in the saloon. I will have him up here no longer."

With renewed irritation the Frenchman had wheeled quickly around, thrusting the toy into the maid's hand and sharply ordering her below.

At the same moment Boyd caught the eye of Lord Hopedale turned in his direction, and he quickly elbowed his way through the group of reporters and tendered his card. The Englishman glanced at it, starting slightly, then quickly exclaimed, touching his wife's arm:

"Oh, I say, Lady Hopedale! This is the inspector who wired he'd board us and——"

But Lady Hopedale had turned before he could finish, and with a graciousness of which neither wealth nor title robs the true American girl, she was extending her hand to the waiting detective.

"I am pleased to meet you, Mr. Boyd, and this is so very good of you," she gratefully exclaimed. "I know that you've been up all night on this dreadful case, for Captain Clay and Lord Hopedale have told me all about it. Though I fear you can accomplish nothing, I really hope you may at least learn the fate of my maid; but as for my jewels, I've quite given up all hope of seeing them again. If you think——"

"I think, Lady Hopedale, if you will pardon the interruption, that I should waste no time in making such inquiries as may add to my knowledge of the case," Boyd dryly interrupted. "The steamer will be docked before long, and each minute may be of value."

Though thoroughly conversant with the laws that govern polite society, Felix Boyd had spoken in a way that left no alternative but compliance, and the subtle ring of his gravely courteous voice was followed by a moment of silence.

Hopedale's eyes opened wider. Those of his wife, while she colored quickly, took on an amused and semi-quizzical expression. The group of reporters fell back a few paces, with startled glances at Boyd, whose name and reputation were known to them, and who instinctively felt that there was something sensational in the wind. The customs officers and passengers who had overheard edged a little nearer, Fayal among them, all wondering what was coming.

Yet Felix Boyd appeared oblivious to their interest. He had seen indications that his instructions had been disobeyed, that his mission already was known, or, at least, suspected, and he made no further attempt to conceal it.

He glanced indifferently about, then down the grand stairway into the saloon, where the maid still was trying to quiet the crying infant.

"Inquiries — why, certainly, Mr. Boyd!" said Lady Hopedale. "Any questions you may ask shall be promptly answered."

"I shall need to ask only a few, Lady Hopedale, and those relate chiefly to your missing maid, Mary Dunn. The circumstances bearing upon the theft of your diamonds already have been imparted to me in the wireless messages received last night from your husband and Captain Clay."

"So I have been told, Mr. Boyd."

"Let's get at this other matter at once, then, that I may lose no time in taking some decisive action in the case. I wish to know, first of all, how you happened to employ Mary Dunn."

Lady Hopedale arched her brows and shrugged her shapely shoulders.

"Why, I had to have a maid, Mr. Boyd, after my other one left me," she replied, as if such a question appeared needless.

"So you employed Mary Dunn, eh?"

"Yes, sir."

"Her predecessor left you to be married, I am told."

"That is true."

"I am not so sure of it," said Boyd, with a curtness characteristic of him at such times. "Had she, to your knowledge, been making any preparations for marriage previous to leaving your employ?"

"Why, no, I do not recall that she had."

"Were you at all surprised when she informed you of her intention?"

"Yes, I admit that I was."

"Then you certainly were not expecting it," argued Boyd. "When did she first give you notice of her intention to quit service?"

"Only a week before her departure."

"In the light of these circumstances, Lady Hopedale, has it not occurred to you that the girl may have been bribed to leave you, solely in order that Mary Dunn might get the vacant place?"

"Dear me! I never once had thought of it!"

"Well, well, let's see!" cried Boyd. "I'm told that the former maid recommended her."

"I admit that she did."

"Did you accept her upon that alone?"

"Indeed, I did not! Mary Dunn had written recommendations from several prominent people."

"Did you take any steps to verify them?"

"Well, no, I did not."

"Then, for all you know, Lady Hopedale, the written recommendations may have been forgeries."

"But the girl would not have dared impose upon me in that fashion," frowned Lady Hopedale. "I might at any time have met the persons mentioned."

"Bear in mind, however, that you were soon coming to America, a fact quite generally known."

"Yes, that is true."

"Yet you had faith in Mary Dunn and did not distrust her?"

"I confess that is so."

"You went even so far as to tell her of the secret hiding-place for your diamonds."

"Yes, I did even that," admitted Lady Hopedale.

Now she spoke with a dismal little laugh, and a side glance at her mutely attentive husband, much as if Felix Boyd's inquiries, made with unmistakable significance, were presenting new possibilities in connection with the robbery, and opening her pretty eyes to the culpable carelessness of which she had been guilty.

Yet Boyd appeared entirely oblivious to her embarrassment; oblivious to the augmented interest of the reporters, now pressing even nearer with their open note-books; oblivious to the curious stare of the listening revenue officers and the wondering gaze of the silent passengers; and oblivious, too, to the darker countenance and knitting brows of Mr. Moses Fayal in the near background.

"Let us go a step further, Lady

Hopedale, since only you and Mary Dunn knew where your diamonds were hidden," he presently continued, after a momentary silence that none had cared to break. "You had no cause, I infer, to think that any other of the house-servants had discovered your secret?"

"No, Mr. Boyd."

"Most of them had been for a long time in Lord Hopedale's employ?"

"Yes, all of them."

"Which is sufficient evidence of their honesty and eliminates from suspicion —assuming the thief to have been an inmate of the house—all except your own newly acquired maid, Mary Dunn."

"But really, Mr. Boyd, she had no opportunity to steal the diamonds," protested Lady Hopedale, who had become very sober upon seeing that she was so seriously at fault. "I saw her conceal them—saw her with my own eyes, Mr. Boyd! She went out only a little later, moreover, and I did not once leave my room until after the theft was discovered."

"You were reading all the while?"

"Yes."

"Are you sure you did not drop asleep?"

"Absolutely sure, sir."

"Then the diamonds were stolen from under your open eyes."

"I cannot well deny it."

"Were you seated with your back to their hiding-place?"

"Yes, a part of the time," admitted Lady Hopedale, with her lips beginning to quiver. "But I cannot think that Mary Dunn had any opportunity to remove the jewels."

"None that you saw, perhaps, yet the hand of a clever thief is quicker than an inexperienced eye," Boyd pointedly declared. "As a matter of fact, she is the one who most easily could have stolen them, and, in the light of what since has occurred, I am convinced of her guilt."

"What since has occurred?" frowned Hopedale, observing his wife's agitation and chagrin. "To what do you refer, Mr. Boyd?"

"To Mary Dunn's mysterious disappearance so quickly after boarding this steamer."

"But what does that signify, other than that the unfortunate girl possibly fell overboard?" asked Lady Hopedale, with voice trembling.

Boyd laughed derisively, a laugh that sent a crimson glow to the woman's cheeks, and caused even the Central Office man to stare and wonder, familiar though he was with Boyd's peculiar methods.

"It signifies far more than that," the latter curtly rejoined. "The girl still enjoyed your blind confidence, Lady Hopedale, or you would not have retained her in your service. Free from suspicion, how easily she still may have imposed upon you! Her sudden disappearance plainly points to—no, no, don't take it to heart, Lady Hopedale," Boyd quickly broke off to add, when tears began to show in the woman's eyes. "I shall presently explain what I mean, possibly with ocular evidence. I now want, if you please, a description of Mary Dunn. Was she tall or short, fleshy or slight, light or dark—come, come, Lady Hopedale, this is most important, and every moment is of value. I must end this inquiry before we reach the dock."

Boyd's voice was steadily taking on a more ominous ring, his eyes a more threatening glow. His throng of staring hearers were startled, and Hopedale, though he did not interrupt, was frowning resentfully. His wife, however, had quickly governed her agitation, and now hastened to reply.

"The girl was quite tall and slight."

"Light or dark?" demanded Boyd crisply.

"Very light, sir, with short hair."

"How short?"

"It had been closely cut during a recent illness."

"Any other distinctive features?"

"She had lost her upper teeth, Mr. Boyd, and was planning to have false ones made in New York."

"Anything more?"

"Not that I recall."

"When did you last see her, Lady Hopedale?"

"About nine o'clock in the evening, on the day that we sailed. She complained of a headache, and asked permission to come out on deck. I did not see her again, sir, but Mr. Fayal, who has the next suite to ours, saw her an hour later."

"Was he the last who saw her?"

"So far as I know."

Boyd swung around with an abruptness that startled every observer.

"Where is Mr. Fayal?" he cried. "I want a word with him."

There was no response for a moment. Fayal had disappeared.

III.

"Fayal—he's in the saloon," interrupted one of the passengers who had overheard Boyd's question. "He went below only a minute ago."

During the colloquy, Felix Boyd had repeatedly turned in the direction of the grand stairway, and the Central Office man began to suspect that he already knew where Mr. Moses Fayal so suddenly had vanished.

Boyd quickly bowed to the passenger who had spoken, however, and then abruptly elbowed a path through the throng of observers and strode toward the stairway, pausing only in deference to a lady who had just mounted the stairs and was emerging from the saloon.

She was quite tall and moderately stout, with dark features and an abundance of black hair. Her face was partly hidden by a polka-dotted veil knotted over her hat; for she was clad as if to leave the ship as soon as it was docked.

Evidently she had overheard Boyd's inquiry while ascending the stairs, for, when he paused and drew aside, she bowed and smiled appreciatively, displaying a double row of even, white teeth, at the same time remarking a bit languidly, with the air of one half-sick:

"Did I hear you ask for my husband, sir? He is below with the nurse and baby."

"Ah, yes," murmured Boyd. "Thank you very much."

Without a glance after her while she walked slowly along the corridor and entered her stateroom, he quickly descended the stairway into the saloon. Like the deck, it was thronged with people, many of whom were making ready to disembark. The nurse with the fretful child was walking to and fro near a table, some yards from the base of the stairs, while the man Boyd sought was glancing at a book upon it.

"Are you Mr. Fayal?"

The Frenchman looked up, then bowed slightly.

"Yes, that is my name," he replied, with a searching scrutiny of his questioner's face.

"I am told by Lady Hopedale that you, Mr. Fayal, were the last person to see her maid last Wednesday evening. In that case——"

"That may not be the case, sir," interrupted Fayal, a bit coldly. "It is true that I saw her. I have no way of knowing, however; that I was the last to see her."

"I accept the correction," replied Boyd, with a dry little laugh. "If you will, however, you possibly can assist me in clearing up the mystery of the girl's disappearance."

"In what way?"

"By answering a few questions for me."

"With pleasure, sir, I assure you."

The Frenchman bowed and smiled, yet a certain sinister gleam in his dark eyes, steadfastly fixed upon Boyd's thin, white face, gave his words the lie.

As one might infer, the grand stairway was already blocked with people who had followed Boyd from the deck. Those most interested, Lord and Lady Hopedale, the Central Office man, and Captain Clay, along with half a dozen reporters, had descended to the saloon, and were awaiting with mute astonishment the outcome of Boyd's unexpected move.

The maid with the fretful infant had edged nearer her master's elbow, and

appeared somewhat awed by the scene, but Fayal seemed to have forgotten them and the general annoyance the child occasioned.

"What can I tell you about the girl?" he inquired impatiently, with a sharp glance at the people thronging back of Boyd.

"At what time, Mr. Fayal, did you see her?"

"About ten o'clock, I think."

"Where, if you please?"

"On the promenade-deck."

"Was she alone?"

"Yes."

"What was she doing?"

"She was gazing over the rail."

"Did you see any other person near her?"

"I did not. The deck was otherwise deserted."

"Quite a rough night, wasn't it?"

"Yes, quite."

"With some wind and fog, I am told?"

"That is right."

"Did you speak to the girl, Mr. Fayal?"

"I did not."

"What did you think about her?"

"Think about her?"

Fayal echoed the question with a semi-subdued snarl. Plainly he was angered by Boyd's questions, irritated by the steady stare of those around him. The frown about his eyes became almost threatening.

Yet Felix Boyd appeared oblivious to it, and quickly continued:

"Yes, Mr. Fayal, what did you think about her? Did you suspect nothing?"

"Suspect—what should I have suspected?" demanded Fayal. "I'm not in the habit of devoting much thought to the servants of other people."

"True, no doubt," Boyd curtly admitted. "Yet the fact that the girl was alone there, and staring over the rail on such a night as that, might well have warranted some misgivings. Did it not occur to you that she might be contemplating suicide?"

"Not for a moment," cried Fayal, with augmented resentment. "Why do you ply me with such questions as these? Are you mad enough to think that I had any designs upon the girl—or even that I murdered her?"

"Oh, by no means!" exclaimed Boyd.

"Why, then, do you question me in this fashion?"

"Because, Mr. Fayal, the disappearance of the girl, who is known to have robbed Lady Hopedale of valuable diamonds, suggests one of three things," Boyd forcibly rejoined. "I think you will presently see the point, sir."

"I have no wish to see it," declared Fayal. "I have no interest in this matter."

His resentment was developing into anger. The persistency of Boyd, the subtle insinuations that lay back of his remarks, the steady stare of the throng of mute observers, the fact that the situation was rapidly becoming more and more strained—all had combined to send the color from the Frenchman's face and arouse the worst part of his nature.

"I have a very serious interest in it, however, and you surely will not refuse to aid me," Boyd quickly rejoined. "As I remarked, the disappearance of Mary Dunn plainly suggests one of three probabilities, Mr. Fayal. The girl may have met her death by accident, as many are inclined to believe."

"And as I believe."

"On the other hand, if guilty of the robbery and filled with remorse, she may have committed suicide, by throwing herself into the sea. Yet if neither of those assumptions is correct, there remains a far more plausible theory—that the girl has an accomplice here, her confederate in the recent robbery, and that the two are playing a crafty game by which she aims to elude Lady Hopedale and avert a further search for herself."

"Game—what kind of a game do you mean?" demanded Fayal. "Such a theory is absurd."

"No, no, far from it," persisted Boyd. "The girl may still be on board concealed in the stateroom of her confederate, possibly in an assumed character, cleverly disguised, feigning an illness which has allowed her consistently to

keep her room and avoid the possibility of detection by her late mistress. If this is the case, I am resolved to find her. If this is the case, I think I also shall find—by the way, Mr. Fayal, at what hour that night did you return to your stateroom?"

The question came with an abruptness that caused the Frenchman, now as white as the linen at his throat, to recoil and glance sharply about.

The Central Office man was edging nearer the table; nearer the two men who figured chiefly in the threatening scene. Not a sound save that of their voices, both tense with suppressed feeling, broke the silence of the broad saloon. The crowd stood mute and staring. Hopedale appeared like a man dazed. His wife, bending nearer, with hands pressed to her breast, with eyes half-starting from her head, was gazing fixedly at Felix Boyd, like a woman held under a spell.

Fayal's teeth met with a snap when he answered Boyd's question.

"I cannot say at what hour," he resentfully cried. "I do not remember."

"Was your wife awake?" demanded Boyd. "Possibly she knows and will inform——"

"My wife is ill and——"

"Surely not too ill to answer a single question," cried Boyd, with added austerity. "Where is she, Mr. Fayal? If she——"

"She is in her stateroom and——"

"Send for her, then! Surely she is able to——"

The ring of Boyd's threatening voice was mingled with a sudden, sharp shriek from the fretful infant. The Frenchman swung around, as if the sound had pierced him like the thrust of a knife. White with rage, as if blind to the repulsive picture he presented, he thrust the nurse rudely away and cried, with unbridled passion:

"Take that screech-owl on deck! Go send his mother below! Take him away, I say!"

The girl, who was nearly as pale as her master, started to obey. As she was about to pass him, however, Boyd thrust out his hand to stop her.

"You wait here, my girl!" he sharply commanded. "If it's all the same to you, Fayal, we'll keep the child below. I first wish——"

Instead of completing his remark, Boyd suddenly snatched from the hand of the nurse the rattle previously mentioned. With a single, violent blow upon the table by which he was standing, he broke the bulb of the toy to atoms—and over the dark, baize cover of the table there rolled a score of unset diamonds—blazing like stars upon the darker cloth.

A scream broke from the nurse—and one of amazement from Lady Hopedale.

Both were fairly drowned, however, by the furious cry that came from the Frenchman, whose every feature was convulsed and distorted. His right hand flashed to his hip pocket, and he fiercely sprang at Felix Boyd—only to rush blindly into the arms of the Central Office man, who suddenly had darted between them.

Boyd drew back with hardly a change of countenance.

"Thanks, Jimmie!" he said quietly. "Hang onto him, and I'll see what his stateroom has to offer—and his alleged wife! You, Lord Hopedale, look after those baubles of my lady!"

"No, no, Jimmie, it doesn't much matter how Mary Dunn secured the diamonds. That she removed them in some crafty way, under the very eyes of her mistress, now is obvious. I felt sure of it from the first, as you may judge from the deductions already mentioned. Her sudden disappearance on the steamer pointed plainly to the game she was attempting with her confederate—that of inviting a theory of suicide, thus dropping out of sight and avoiding further search for her and her plunder."

Such was Boyd's summing up of the case as he drove up from the pier that afternoon, in company with Coleman, the latter having seen that the culprits were well on their way to the Tombs.

"Yes, yes, it's plain enough now, Felix," Coleman replied, lolling back

on the cushions of the cab. "But I'm blessed if I can see how you arrived at all this!"

Boyd laughed lightly and tossed his head.

"It required a sleepless night, Jimmie, and no end of wireless telegrams," he indifferently rejoined. "I soon felt sure that the maid had stolen the jewels, however; also that she had a confederate. Though no confession from them is probable, I think we later shall learn that the former maid was bribed to leave Lady Hopedale's employ. That job probably was done by Fayal, and the entire scheme was of his rascally invention."

"No doubt, Felix."

"After securing the diamonds," continued Boyd, "the two evidently had planned to escape to America, where, if Mary Dunn was thought to be dead, they would be comparatively safe from detection. I suspected that much, Jimmie, the moment I received the telegram informing me of the girl's disappearance on the steamer, also that the diamonds were on board. I realized the difficulty of getting them ashore, for I knew they must be smuggled, and I resolved to board the steamer and see what I could personally discover."

"And a good move it proved to be."

"Oh, I was not long lighting upon my man, Jimmie," Boyd dryly laughed. "One only, as we came aboard, was elbowing close enough to me to hear any remark that would indicate my mission."

"Fayal."

"Certainly. I had him marked from that moment. Next I learned that his suite adjoined that of the Hopedales; a very significant fact, Jimmie, in that Mary Dunn might have informed him which suite her employers were to have."

"I see the point."

"A little later when the rascal's child dropped his rattle, the haste with which Fayal attempted to recover it at once suggested to me that it might contain the missing diamonds, and that that crafty method had been adopted to smuggle them ashore."

"Shrewd, Felix, on my word."

"I was taking no chances of a slip-up by acting too hastily, however," smiled Boyd. "I proceeded to question Lady Hopedale, observing all the while that Fayal was intently listening. I knew that if I could alarm him, I could evoke further self-betrayals, and I directed my inquiries accordingly. You may be very sure, however, that I had my eye on the nurse and rattle all the while."

"Yes, yes, no doubt," laughed the Central Office man.

"Presently, while I was asking for a description of the missing maid, Fayal dove hurriedly below. He previously had remarked that his wife was in the saloon. I suspected that he now thought it discreet to get her out of my sight. A moment later, confirming my suspicion, there emerged from the saloon a lady of whose identity I already felt sure. That she was in disguise, her fair complexion artfully stained, her short locks covered with a wig, her lost teeth replaced with a false set, and her slight figure carefully padded, I had not a doubt. For the conduct of Fayal was telling the story."

"Yes, yes, Felix, I remember her," nodded Coleman. "It was then that I began to see at what you were driving."

"And it then became an easy matter, Jimmie, to drive the Frenchman to the wall," continued Boyd, with a quiet little laugh. "I don't know how long our feverish little interview might have continued had he not attempted to send the nurse on deck. I knew what that meant, Jimmie. Overboard with the rattle and the evidence of the robbery, Jimmie, for it was obvious that the maid was in the game, and had been instructed what to do in an emergency."

"So that is why you stopped her and brought the scene to a climax, eh?"

"Yes, precisely," nodded Boyd, feeling for a cigar. "Yet I had seen enough to convince me that I was on the right track. I smashed the toy with perfect confidence, and—well, well, you saw the result."

"Rather!" growled Coleman, with a

grin. "Did Mary Dunn put up any bluff when you confronted her in the stateroom?"

Boyd laughed and shook his head.

"None worth mentioning, Jimmie," he replied. "She wilted like a rag when I accused her. It appears that she had a fever after the birth of her child, and it became necessary to clip her locks. The rascally couple then were in Liverpool, and upon hearing of Lady Hopedale's intention of visiting America, and already aware that she possessed valuable diamonds, Fayal devised the crafty scheme he came so near successfully executing."

"There still is one point on which I am somewhat in the dark."

"What is that, Jimmie?"

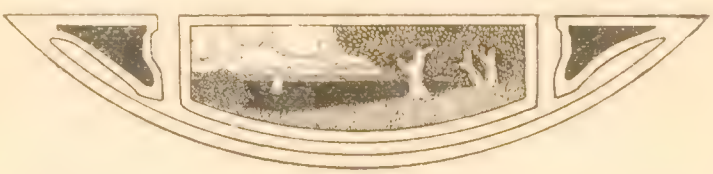
"Passage must have been secured for one more person than embarked on the steamer, Felix. In which case——"

"In which case, Jimmie, which certainly was the case," Boyd quietly interrupted; "only two came aboard with Fayal, his nurse and his child. That part of the fraud was simple, Jimmie, yet it required the early completion of Fayal's booking. Hence the speedy disappearance of Lady Hopedale's maid and the immediate appearance of Mr. Moses Fayal's invalid wife."

"Yes, yes, I see," the Central Office man thoughtfully nodded. "Ah, you're drowsy, eh?"

Mr. Felix Boyd had indulged in a prolonged yawn.

"Rather," he answered, with a sigh. "I have a full night's sleep to make up, Jimmie. This infernal vocation of ours—ah, well, what matters? One must sow if one would reap. If I have an aching head, the man with the hoe has, I presume, an aching back. It's only a matter of location, Jimmie. Will you smoke a cigar, old man?"



WHEN THE TONGUE SLIPS

A FEW years ago, at Oxford, a clergyman startled his congregation by announcing that the next hymn would be "Kinkering Kongs Their Titles Take." Of course, what he really meant to say was, "Conquering Kings Their Titles Take"—the first line of the well-known hymn—but the amusing slip of the tongue was not forgotten by the undergraduates present, and ever since similar mistakes have been known as "Spoonerisms," after the name of the cleric in question, who is now Canon Spooner.

There is another story told of a clergyman who, noticing the sleepy condition of his audience at the end of a particularly long and dry discourse, sorrowfully observed that he was addressing "beery wenches." This is the Spoonerism of "weary benches."

What is probably the most amusing Spoonerism must be credited to a country clergyman. In the course of a solemn exhortation, he said: "Each of you, my dear brethren, must have known at one time or another what it is to have a half-warmed fish in your bosom." The startled congregation regained their composure when the preacher substituted "half-formed wish" for "half-warmed fish." It may have been the same minister who announced that "the sermon for next Sunday will be screeched by the Reverend John Creke." The ludicrous mistake was accentuated by the fact that Mr. Creke was the possessor of a high-pitched voice, which racked the nerves of those who had the courage to face one of his sermons.

The Rockspur Nine

A STORY FOR OUR YOUNGER READERS

By Burt L. Standish

SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED.

During a match game to decide the championship between the rival baseball nines of Rockspur and Highland, John Smith, a Rockspur player, makes two misplays, thereby causing his side to lose the game. He has long been considered a Jonah by the other boys, and they are unsparing in their denunciations. Robert Linton, the son of one of the magnates of the town, makes a slurring remark about John's father, and when John hotly retaliates, Linton strikes him. On the spur of the moment John returns the blow, then remembers that he has promised his mother never to fight, and he refuses to do so, though Linton hits him repeatedly. The other boys look on him as a coward in consequence, and while Agnes Mayfair and her brother show him some kindness, he is pretty generally ostracized by the young people of the town. John determines that he will prove that he does amount to something, and that he can play baseball, and with this in mind he goes to Mart Powers, a retired baseball pitcher living in Rockspur, and is secretly coached by him. When the rival nines meet again John is not asked to play for Rockspur, but he substitutes for one of the Highlanders. He does not distinguish himself as a fielder, but when he comes to bat his lips are set determinedly, and his first crack at the ball sends it toward center field—an apparent two-bagger.

CHAPTER XIX.

JOHN AT THE BAT.

"WELL, what do you think of that?" yelled Phil Garrison, who was coaching near first. "Old Murphy can't touch it!"

But Davis, the coacher by third, made signals for Walker to hold second till the ball came down, for Dennis Murphy was running as hard as he could to get under it, though it did not seem possible for him to capture John Smith's long fly.

Dennis, however, was a wonderfully good fielder, and John himself feared that the Irish youth might succeed in his purpose. And he was right, for, after a long, hard run, the Rockspur center-fielder caught the fly, which put John out and caused Lee Walker to jump back to second and stay there.

"Hard luck, Smith," declared Walker pleasantly. "That wild Irishman robbed you of a two-bagger."

John himself felt rather sore over this, though he had hit the ball so hard and Bentley had not struck him out. He walked slowly back to the bench.

Bentley was relieved, as he had been badly frightened, thinking it would be a disgrace for Smith to get a hit off him. Some of the spectators asked John how he happened to do it, and chaffed him in various ways, but he made no reply to anything they said.

Frank Fisher was the next batter, and, though he could pitch, he could not hit the ball. He did put up a foul, which was easily caught, however, and the visitors had failed to place a score to their credit.

"You're just getting into trim, Bent, old man," said Sterndale, as the home team gathered at their bench.

"But you came near letting Jonah get a star hit off you," reproached Linton. "That would have been something awful!"

This story began in the July issue. The back numbers can be obtained through any newsdealer. Price ten cents each.

"It was an accident," asserted Leon, lighting a cigarette. "It won't happen again."

Rockspur was eager to add something to the four scores already obtained, but Stubby Fisher was in great form, and he sent out the batters in one, two, three order, which caused him to receive an ovation when he came in from the box.

Now the head of Highland's batting-list came up, and Morse led off with a single, while Garrison advanced him on a sacrifice, which was followed by a two-bagger from Davis, and Ned came racing home, bringing the Highland spectators to their feet in a cheering body, for the first score had been obtained.

"Got 'em going!" cried Walker exultantly. "Keep it up, fellows!"

Being nervous, Bentley gave Dow, the next hitter, a base on balls. Sterndale tried to steady Leon down, but the shouting of the Highland crowd completely rattled the cigarette-smoking pitcher, who crossed signals with the captain, the result being a passed ball, letting both runners advance a base.

Dick, having recovered the ball, walked down and talked to Bentley for the purpose of giving him time to cool off. This, nevertheless, was not successful, for Leon had lost his control, and, by waiting patiently, Spud Hartford got four balls, which sent him down to first with a grin on his homely face.

Then Lee Walker came up and smashed out a beautiful single, bringing in two more men and carrying Hartford to third.

The Rockspur crowd was disgusted and the players were desperate. Only one Highlander was out, and another tally would tie the score. Two of the visitors were on bases, one being on third. They knew Walker would try to steal on the very first ball pitched, and they were not mistaken.

Sterndale threw low to second, and Hartford started off third, only to turn back when he saw the Rockspur short-stop run in to intercept the throw.

Too late the short-stop realized that Walker had turned back and was not going home. He could not let the ball pass for Chatterton to take it on the bound and try to catch the runner, so he held it and whirled just in time to see Walker making a safe slide to second.

Hartford roared with laughter, shouting triumphantly:

"Why, you fellows didn't think you were goin' to catch anybody with that game, did you? Why don't you learn something new?"

This delighted the visiting spectators, and Bentley went "into the air" again, giving Johnson a base on balls, which filled the bags once more.

"We'll never stop," declared Walker, dancing around second.

"Oh, yes, you'll stop now!" retorted Rob Linton, as John Smith came to bat once more. "Jonah will settle your hash right here."

John's mouth was closed now, and there was a look of determination on his face. He let the first ball pass, for it was wild; but he struck at the second one, hit it, and sent it whistling toward Linton like a bullet from a Mauser rifle.

CHAPTER XX.

AN AMAZING CATCH.

Rob Linton thrust out one hand to stop that ball, and it nearly took his fingers off, while he did not seem to retard in the least its progress.

"Run, boys, run!" shrieked Phil Garrison from the coaching-line, and Joe Davis roared from the opposite side of the diamond: "Crawl, you snails, crawl! That's a dandy! Oh, my! what a lovely hit!"

Spud Hartford scored, with Lee Walker coming down the line from third with race-horse speed, and the spectators howling like a lot of Indians. That is, the spectators on one side howled, while those on the other side kept still and looked on in dismay.

Thad Boland started after the ball, but Dennis Murphy came over from his own field, and got it before Old Lightning was anywhere near it. By the time

the Irish youth turned with the sphere in his hand Zack Johnson had reached third, and Davis took a desperate chance in sending him home.

Dennis threw to Linton, but Rob was angry and rattled, and the ball glanced from his hands and shot off the diamond over the line between third and home.

John Smith, having reached second when Dennis threw, took advantage of Rob's muff to gather himself and make a mad try for third, his teeth riveted together and his nostrils dilated.

On the bleachers two girls were looking on, one in astonishment and dismay, the other in admiration and delight.

"There, there!" panted Agnes, "now he has done something! Look at him, Dora!"

Dora Deland looked on blankly, and then began to bite her lips. The success of the outcast made her angry.

"I think it mean," she exclaimed pettishly. "It's a mean thing for any fellow to play against his own side."

"Why," said Agnes, "a little while ago you said he was not playing against his own side, as they were glad to get rid of him."

"Why didn't he do something like that when he played with our boys?" flashed the angry girl. "Oh, I hate him!"

"Dora!" exclaimed Agnes reprovingly. "What has he ever done to make you hate him?"

"Everything. Just look at that! See how many scores those horrid Highland fellows have made just off that strike! Why didn't Rob Linton catch the ball?"

"I think it was too hard for him to catch," smiled Agnes.

John had reached third, sliding as handsomely as the best of the players, and Highland was wild with joy, its sharp, barking cry sounding from the tumultuous bleachers, while the players literally hugged each other.

"Hold up, Smithy, old peach!" screamed Joe Davis, dancing grotesquely on the coaching-line by third. "Oh, say! wasn't that a jim-hickey! Well, what's the matter with Smith?"

"He's all right!" came back in a great shout from the crimson side.

Walker, panting and laughing, ran down from the vicinity of the home plate, and, regardless of coaching-lines, dashed up to third and grasped John's hand.

"You're all right, Smith!" he declared. "You cracked that out just when it was needed!" Then he turned toward the Rockspur bleachers and scornfully asked: "Where is the chump who called him a Jonah?"

His answer was in the form of a few feeble groans, for the Rockspur crowd was too astonished to say a word.

Dick Sterndale was feeling ill, but Rob Linton looked sick and ashamed, to say nothing of Bentley, off whom John had obtained the hit.

With ill-suppressed fury, Leon walked over to Linton and called him several hard names, demanding why he had not held the ball.

This made Rob still angrier, and there were prospects of a quarrel between the chums, but Sterndale interposed and poured oil on the troubled waters.

"This is only the beginning of the game," said Dick. "They are two scores ahead of us now, but we can make that even in no time, and we'll win in a walk."

Caring nothing for the way the Highlanders laughed at his words, he placed a hand on Leon's shoulder, turning him back toward his position.

"Play ball! play ball!" yelled the Highland crowd. "Are you going to quit? Make them play, Mr. Umpire!"

"Play ball!" cried the umpire commandingly.

But Sterndale took lots of time, knowing Bentley was badly broken up by what had happened. However, Stubby Fisher was the next striker, and, as usual, he did very little, putting up an infield fly, which Mayfair handled.

Two men were out and Smith was on third when Morse took his place in the batter's box and cracked out a single that brought John home. But that ended the run-getting, for Garrison again got out, this time on a grounder

to Don Scott, who whistled it over to first.

But the third inning had ended with the score standing seven to four in favor of the visitors, which sent Highland into the field in a very happy mood.

There came near being more wrangling between Bentley and Linton at the bench, Sterndale being compelled to exercise his authority.

"Let's forget it," he said. "We'll buckle to it and take the lead again in short order. Mayfair, you're the first hitter. Try for a safe single."

But Rockspur was not destined to get the lead again for some time. Not a score was made by either side in the fourth and fifth innings, although the home team advanced a runner to third each time. Fisher was on his mettle, and he pitched splendidly.

Down in center John Smith was learning many things about pitching by watching the beautiful work of the little Highlander.

In the sixth inning Rockspur secured a score through a combination of scratch hits and poor playing by the Highland infield. Two more men would have come in, but John Smith took a long fly and put the third man out.

In Highland's half, however, Bentley was again batted hard, and two more scores were made, which left the record nine to five against the home team.

It was beginning to look rather dark for Rockspur, and some of the players were muttering that John Smith had brought the whole thing about.

"He's a hoodoo to us whether he plays with us or against us," said Linton gloomily. "It was a mistake to permit him to play with those fellows."

"You were the one who suggested it to Walker," reminded Bentley, giving his friend a resentful look.

"Well, who ever thought he could do anything!" exclaimed Rob fiercely. "He never did before in all his life. I didn't suppose he had nerve enough."

"Faith! an' he had nerve enough to thry to stop yer faythers runaway horse to save yer own sisther from bein' kilt intoirely," put in Dennis Murphy. "An' there wur others that called him a coward, and they didn't dare to lift a hand at all, at all."

To this Linton made no retort, for, knowing the Irish youth was ready to fight at the drop of a hat, he did not wish an encounter with Dennis.

To the delight of the Rockspur crowd, the tide seemed to turn in this inning, three scores being made, which left the home team just one behind the visitors and set everybody tingling with excitement once more.

Fortune was with Bentley, too, for, not a little to his own surprise, he struck out Walker and Hartford, and forced John Smith to drop a short fly into Don Scott's hands, which retired Highland in a hurry without scoring.

In the seventh neither side scored, but in the eighth, amid the wildest uproar, Rockspur got down to work and made two runs, which put the home team again in the lead.

"Now," said Sterndale, "we must hold 'em. We have this game safe and sure if we play for all we are worth."

They did play, too, not permitting Highland to get a man past second, and the inning closed with Rockspur leading, the score standing ten to nine.

And now Rockspur came to bat for the last time, cheered by the crowd on the home bleachers.

"Let's make it safe," urged Dick, speaking to his men, who gathered about him. "We can do it if we try. Chat, you're the first hitter. See what you're made of, old man."

"You can bub-bub-bub-bet I'll do my lul-lul-lul-level best," stammered Danny, selecting his own particular bat and spitting on his hands.

He let two balls pass, one of which was called a strike, and then he managed to bunt out a little one that took everybody by surprise and let him reach first.

Mayfair came next. He waited for Danny to steal, but Fisher held the runner close to first, and two strikes were called on the batter. Then, finding that he must do something, Walter got a short hit past third, carrying Danny down to second.

Thad Boland came next, but, strange to say, he had been doing pretty well at bat all day, and Fisher realized it would not be good policy to regard him as an easy mark.

Chatterton pranced off second, trying to lead Fisher into throwing. He kept his eyes on Morse, the baseman, and played off as far as Davis, the shortstop. Morse seeming careless, Danny was thinking of trying to make a desperate bid for third when, to his astonishment, Fisher whirled like a flash and threw.

Danny plunged back toward second, where he was met by the ball in the hands of—John Smith! Without attracting attention, John had carelessly walked in from the field.

Chatterton and the coachers were watching Morse and Davis, and the spectators did not seem to notice John, or did not understand what he was trying to do.

When he was near second, he saw the Highland catcher put his right hand on his hip, which he knew was the signal for Fisher to turn and throw, so he darted forward.

Fisher was round in a twinkling, and the ball came straight into John's hands. He punched it deep into Chatterton's ribs as Danny, taken by surprise, awkwardly tried to drop to the ground, and the umpire shouted:

"Out at second!"

Highland cheered and scoffed at Danny, who simply stared at John and gasped:

"Well, may I be ju-ju-ju-jiggered!"

Linton was furious.

"To think Chatterton should let that chump catch him!" he snapped. "Why, it's a disgrace! Wait till I get a chance to strike."

Thad Boland managed to get first on balls. Jotham Sprout came up to hit a feeble one into the diamond, but Davis fumbled it, letting Bubble reach first, which filled the bases. But Jotham was so elated that he danced around too much, and Fisher caught him off the bag by a very pretty throw.

However, with two men on bases, a good hit by the next batter meant some scores for Rockspur. Linton picked up his favorite bat and got into position.

Stubby was unfortunate, for his first ball flew wild, and Walter Mayfair came home, while Thad Boland loafed up to third.

"We're two ahead," cried Sterndale. "Get a hit now, Linton, and it wins the game for a sure thing."

Rob slashed furiously at the second ball, but did not touch it. Then he "took one," but the next happened to be just where he wanted it. He hit it a terrible crack, and away it sailed into the air, bringing the Rockspur crowd standing.

"It's a homer!" was the cry. "It's over the fence!"

"Sure as fate!" rang out the clear voice of Sterndale. "Sprint, fellows! It's a homer! That wins this game!"

There was no doubt about it. Unless some unlooked-for, marvelous thing happened, the ball would pass over center-field fence, letting in two more scores, which would put Rockspur four ahead.

John Smith had been playing "deep." Almost instantly he saw that the ball was soaring on its way to pass over the fence, yet he whirled and ran toward that fence as hard as he could.

At that point the center-field fence had sagged inward, but some of the boys had straightened it by placing a timber in a slanting position against one of the posts to hold it securely in position. John saw that timber and sprang upon it, darting up to the top of the fence, where, clinging with one hand, he twisted about and looked for the ball.

It was coming—coming straight at him! Barely did he have time to thrust up his free hand and make a grasp for the ball; but, with that one hand, clinging thus in an awkward position, he caught and held Rob Linton's long fly!

CHAPTER XXI.

HOW HIGHLAND WON THE GAME.

Never had such an astonishing thing been done on that ball-ground, and the spectators seemed struck dumb for some moments. Then the clear voice

of the umpire was heard to declare Linton out, and the Highland crowd broke into a great uproar as John jumped down from the fence with the ball in his hand.

The Highland yell rolled down across the field. The bleachers on the right of the grand stand were covered by a swaying mass of human beings, waving hats, handkerchiefs, hands, and flags.

"'Rah! 'rah! 'rah! Here we are! High-land, my land! 'Rah! 'rah! 'rah!"

Astounded though he was by the amazing work of the outcast, who had been discarded without regard for his feelings, Dick Sterndale did not forget that the score stood eleven to nine in favor of his own team, and he shouted to his players:

"Never mind, fellows; we've got 'em just the same. They've only got one more chance, and we won't let them make a run."

"But, Great Scott!" snapped Leon Bentley, who had lost his cigarette in the excitement, "did you see Jonah catch that ball?"

"Yes, I saw it," nodded the captain. "It was a great piece of work."

"Great? Why, a duffer like that has no right to do such a thing!"

"It's mesilf thot's thinkin' he's not such a duffer, afther all," came from Dennis Murphy, who could not conceal the twinkle of satisfaction in his eyes.

At first Linton refused to believe that Smith had caught the ball. Declaring such a thing impossible, he would have quarreled with the umpire, but Sterndale stopped that.

When John came in from the field, he was given a warm greeting by the Highland spectators. He lifted his cap in acknowledgment, but his face was as unmoved as that of a graven image. He showed neither satisfaction nor pride over what he had done; but it was noticeable that his mouth was firmly shut and his jaws rigid.

While Walker almost hugged him, the other Highlanders declared it was the prettiest thing it had ever been their pleasure to witness.

"But we want three scores, fellows," said Lee; "and we must have them. Bentley is easy. Don't be too fierce to get a hit; a base on balls is just as good. It's your lead off, Dow."

Hud Dow was nervous, but he tried not to show it. If he had taken Walker's advice and waited, he might have reached first on balls, for Bentley had poor control; but he tried to get a hit, the result being a short fly that Don Scott took, after a sharp, backward run.

Now Rockspur yelled, and the hopes of the visitors fell a notch. Walker talked quietly to Hartford, the next batter, who had been swinging two heavy bats while Dow was striking.

Hartford waited well, but Bentley put over two "corner-clippers," both of which were pronounced strikes, much to the disgust of the batter, who might have questioned the decisions had it not been for his steady-headed captain.

Then Hartford grew desperate and swung at a bad one, which he did not touch, and the second batter was out in short order.

Now the Highlanders were pretty blue, while the Rockspur crowd was crowing and singing premature pæans of victory.

"It's all over but the shouting!" laughed Sterndale, with the utmost confidence. "It's no use to try, Walker," he added, as Lee walked up to the plate with a bat.

The Highland captain made no retort, but determination was written on his face. Minding not the jeers and shouts of the Rockspur spectators, who were trying to rattle him, he gave a very good exhibition of coolness and judgment.

Two balls and one strike were called, and then Walker met one fairly, getting an easy single.

"That starts it, fellows!" he cried, when he was safely on first. "Keep it up. Let's win it now. All we need is three scores."

"Is th-th-th-th-that all?" mocked Danny Chatterton, from his position near second. "You'll get 'em—I dud-dud-don't think!"

Sterndale, crouching close under the bat, worked carefully with Bentley,

knowing it would not take much to send the pitcher "up in the air" again.

As Johnson was forced to strike twice, it looked as if another moment would settle everything.

There was a hush, and then the batter got a scratch hit to Linton, who failed to handle it in time to do any good. Johnson landed on first, and Walker was advanced to second.

A roar went up when the next batter was seen to rise from the bench and step toward the plate.

It was Smith.

"Here's the man that will do it!" yelled a Highland spectator, while from the Rockspur bleachers came taunts and cries of derision, amid which the outcast could distinguish, repeated over and over, that hateful nickname, "Jonah! Jonah! Jonah!"

Down from the Highland side sprang a pretty girl with flushed cheeks, and straight out to the home plate she ran. She was a little wisp of a thing, not more than fifteen years old, with shining eyes and pretty teeth. From her bosom she tore a crimson knot of ribbon, and from her hair she took a crimson rose. These she pinned to John's breast, standing on her toes to do so, while her cheeks became almost as crimson as the ribbon and flower.

The Highland bleachers cheered wilder than ever over this, drowning any sounds that may have come from the Rockspur side. John was forced to take off his cap again, and one of the Highland players informed him that the girl was Gertie Walker, sister to the captain of the visiting team.

When the cheering lulled somewhat, Dick Sterndale laughingly cried to his men:

"That's all right, fellows. It's enough to make any man strike out. I'll bet Smith can't hit a balloon."

John's jaws hardened, and the flush died out of his cheeks. He fixed his eyes on Bentley, waiting for the ball, and he did not hear any of the taunts and jeers that came from the Rockspur bleachers. In his heart was a great determination—a mighty resolve to do!

He did not realize then the wonderful change that had come over him in one short week, but he was to think of it afterward.

It is probable that the shouting disturbed Bentley more than John, for, regardless of Sterndale's signal, Leon put the first one straight over—and Smith hit it!

Yes, he hit it as never before in all his life had he hit a ball. He met it fairly and squarely, his teeth clenched and his bat gripped hard. The ball shot off like a bullet, without rising high into the air, speeding away toward the distant center-field fence.

"It's going over!" screamed a shrill voice, as Walker and Johnson tore round the diamond and John rushed down to first.

Remembering what John had done, Dennis Murphy dashed at the fence, sprang upon the support, then turned and thrust up his hand toward the ball.

It passed at least five feet above his head and disappeared beyond the fence!

John Smith had won the game for Highland by a beautiful home-run hit over center-field fence, and the visitors, players, and spectators went mad with joy.

CHAPTER XXII.

REVENGE THAT WAS NOT SWEET.

They would have lifted John upon their shoulders, but he pushed them away. They patted him on the back and showered him with compliments. They packed close about him and cheered and cheered, but he forced a path through their midst, with no trace of mirth or triumph on his face.

John looked around and found himself near three persons, one of whom, a beautiful girl, with auburn hair and flashing eyes, stamped her shapely foot and angrily exclaimed:

"I don't care, Dick Sterndale! I think it's just as mean as it can be! Any fellow who will play against his own side and beat them is—is just horrid!"

Then, seeing John, Dora Deland turned her back squarely upon him.

"But, Dora——" protested Agnes, only to be cut short by the other girl, who cried:

"How can you stand up for such a mean fellow?"

Sterndale forced a laugh, observing:

"We all were willing enough for him to play with Highland. We can't kick about it now."

Then he excused himself, and hastened over to Rob Linton and Leon Bentley, who seemed on the verge of blows, as the Rockspur pitcher was blaming his erstwhile chum for everything that had happened, while Rob declared that Leon had pitched like a wooden man. Sterndale stepped between them, and checked their quarreling for the second time that day.

John would have left the ground without delay, but he could not escape the Highland players at once. When he did get away, he hurried toward the gate, passing Rob Linton, who pretended not to see him.

Outside the gate he saw Sterndale walking down the street between Dora and Agnes. How happy it would have made him could he have taken Dick's place! But he was an outcast still, and——

"There goes the sneak!" cried a Rockspur urchin, pointing at John, and a crowd of his companions shouted: "Traitor! sneak! Jonah!"

"But I showed them that I can play ball!" thought John, with bitter resentment. "Let them yelp!"

In the procession of people filing down the hill from the ball-ground, the only really happy ones were those who did not belong in Rockspur. The villagers had been greatly disappointed by the defeat of the home team, and some of them did not hesitate to denounce the "traitor" who had brought this result about.

All alone John walked down the hill. No one save the angry village boys spoke to him, and they yelled at him in mockery. He had obtained revenge upon his former companions of the Rockspur nine, but to him revenge was not sweet. Always had he been loyal to Rockspur and to the academy, and his spirit had rebelled at the thought of playing ball against the home club; but Sterndale's unfeeling treatment of him, coupled with Linton's sneers, had driven him into the ranks of the enemy.

He had been determined to show his former companions that he could play ball, but he had not fancied that he would be the direct cause of Rockspur's defeat. All along he had believed that Rockspur, playing on its own ground, was almost certain to win the game; but, having allied himself with Highland, he went into the game heart and soul to do his level best for the crimson.

That game of ball had taught him a great lesson, for now he fully realized that, in order to do anything thoroughly well, any person must have confidence in himself, and must go at his task with resolution and determination to excel.

Men fail in life because they do not believe in themselves, or because they regard their daily tasks as unworthy of their best efforts. They look ahead to the time when they hope to take up some great task at which they mean to exert themselves fully, and so, day by day, they are neglectful about the little things which it becomes their duty to perform.

No man who is careless or indifferent in small matters ever makes a complete success in great undertakings. The habit of care and painstaking about minor matters is a training that fits one to grapple with greater tasks by and by.

All this was plain enough to John Smith now, but he felt certain that he would have played just as well had he been one of the Rockspur nine that day, and no one could have jeered at him when the game was over.

He passed through the better part of the village and reached the bridge. The declining sun was tinting the placid harbor with pink, and crimsoning the sails of the fishing-boats drifting in past Duffy's Nose. From one of the boats came the sound of a song, chanted by two fishermen, who, for lack of wind,

were working their sloop in with the oars.

More than once had John gazed on this scene and felt his heart overflowing with happiness at the mere thought of being permitted to live in such a glorious world; but now the vision brought him no pleasure, and there seemed something sad and mournful in the faintly heard song of the fishermen.

When he had crossed the bridge he heard the Highland visitors coming down through town behind him, singing and cheering. Thus ran their impromptu song of victory:

Boom-ta-de-aye, de-boom-ta-de-aye,
De-boom-ta, de-boom-ta, de-boom-ta-de-aye;
We won to-day, oh, we won to-day,
Oh, we won, oh, we won, oh, we won to-day!

Down past the post-office came the singing victors, and out upon the bridge they rumbled, team following team. They overtook John Smith, trudging gloomily homeward, greeting him with wild shouts and cheers.

In the first wagon, a double-seater, were Walker, Garrison, Johnson, and Fisher. The captain of the Highland club stood up and yelled:

"Smith, fellows! A locomotive for Smith! Are you ready?"

Then in unison the four yelled:

Ray, ray, ray!
Ziss, ziss, ziss!
Boom, bim, bah!
Smith! Smith! Smith!

Others behind them took up the yell, and John was given a genuine ovation. From one carriage a pretty girl leaned out, waving a crimson flag, and laughingly cried:

"Hurrah for John Smith! Hurrah for John Smith!"

It was Gertie Walker, Lee Walker's sister, who had pinned the ribbon and rose on his breast just before he made the wonderful hit that decided the game.

John waved his cap to her and forced a smile to his face. When they had disappeared up the hill, he took the rose and bunch of ribbon from his breast, gazed at them a moment, then flung them far from him. But, after walking on a little distance, he turned back, found them where he had thrown them, and picked up the rose.

The ribbon he left where it had fallen.

CHAPTER XXIII.

HOW JOHN LEARNED THE CURVES.

The last week at the academy was not a happy one for John, who found himself apparently regarded with still greater aversion by his mates; but he carried himself with a new dignity and independence that they could not fail to observe.

"He's got the swelled head," declared Leon Bentley, between puffs at his cigarette. "He really thinks he can play ball, just because he happened to be lucky in that last game."

"Was it luck?" asked Sterndale.

"Of course it was!" snapped Leon. "It couldn't be anything else. Did you ever know him to do anything like it before?"

"Not in a game," admitted Dick. "Still, it was more than luck. If he had done nothing but make that hit, or the catch, I might have fancied it was luck; but he did great work all through the game, so I call it something besides luck."

"Well, you may call it what you like," muttered the cigarette-smoker; "but I'm willing to bet my life he'll never play like that again as long as he lives."

Singularly enough, Rob Linton had not much to say about John. After the game it was noticeable that the friendship between Rob and Leon was not as close as it had been; indeed, they had very little to do with each other.

John paid little attention to any of them. He had declared that some day they would be glad enough to call him their friend, but it now seemed that the day was very far away.

Of course he felt the injustice of being called a traitor and treated as such when he had been driven into the ranks of the enemy; but he set his teeth and kept his thoughts to himself, hiding the wounds of his sensitive spirit very effectually.

There was one, however, who seemed to see beneath his outer crust and understand his suffering. That one was Agnes, who tried to show her sympathy for him.

One night after school, regardless of what others might think, she walked down the hill from the academy with him. She had hurried after and overtaken him. At first their conversation was constrained, but at last she exclaimed:

"I'm so glad you did it, John."

"Did what?" he asked, surprised.

"Played with Highland and—and showed them what you could do. It was a surprise to everybody—but me."

"And you were not surprised to see that I could play ball?"

"No," she answered honestly. "You know I have seen you practise, and you always did well. Besides that, Walter has said many times that you could play if you'd just go right into the game and forget yourself."

"Has he?" cried John, with a sudden glow of gratitude. "I didn't know——"

"You didn't know that anybody thought so. Well, he did; and he has said you would make a first-class fielder if you were handled right."

"I'm sure I'm glad he thought so; but there were others who thought differently."

"And I think you were treated real mean. They had no right to ask you to play and then take Rob Linton back in your place when he came round. Anyway, he didn't play as well as you, and I guess they know it now. Walter says Dick Sterndale declared you put up twice as good a game as Rob."

"But Sterndale has never said a word to me," came grimly from the tall youth. "He is a selfish fellow, who seems to think he can do and say what he likes, without regard to the feelings of others."

"But you know how popular he is with everybody."

"I know it, and I don't understand it. No matter what he does, everybody seems to think it all right. And I can't understand my own feelings toward him. Sometimes I think I hate him, but when he comes to me and talks pleasant and calls me 'old man,' I just give in and do anything he wishes."

"That's the way with everybody. Dora thinks he's just splendid."

John's face hardened.

"And she despises me," he muttered bitterly.

"I don't believe she dislikes you half as much as she pretends to," asserted Agnes. "She did not understand you; she did not think you could play ball so well. Now she is angry because Rockspur was beaten; but she'll get over it."

When they parted, John paused a moment to say in a sincere manner:

"You have been my friend, and I thank you, Miss Mayfair."

"Don't call me that," she protested, smiling up at him. "Everybody calls me Agnes."

"May I?"

She nodded. "Of course. You are one of my friends."

"Thank you, Agnes. It is good to know I have one friend."

"You'll have many friends some time—I know you will."

She gave him her hand at the gate of her pretty home, and he went onward feeling that a ray of sunlight had pierced the clouds hovering over him.

He was taking his lessons regularly from Powers, and had begun to see that he was making progress. He was eager to get ahead faster, but the old pitcher held him in check, cautioning him against laming his arm.

"A lame arm is a bad thing to cure," said Mart; "and it would put you back more than anything else. The trouble with lots of young fellers who want to pitch is that they git too ambitious and hurt their arms. Then they git disgusted. Just as soon as your arm feels tired or heavy, you want to stop."

Powers watched his pupil closely, giving him a certain amount of work to do every night. This amount he increased slowly. He put the boy through the paces with dumb-bells and Indian clubs. The latter exercise, Mart declared, was the best for both lim-

bering up and strengthening the muscles used in pitching, and John soon became fairly expert with the clubs.

Then, as an end of the lesson, they would put on the gloves for a little bout. This John soon found was the most interesting and exciting part of the lesson, and he made such wonderful progress in sparring, that, within two weeks, he was almost, if not quite, a match for Dennis Murphy.

"It's a holy terror ye'll be wid yer dukes, me b'y," the Irish lad declared one night, after a particularly hot round. "Ye can hit quick as a cat can wink her oie, an' yer arrums are so long ye have nivver a bit av throuble in r'achin' over a felly's garrud. Oi'll bet me hat ye can whip Rob Linton today."

"But I am not learning to box so that I can fight," asserted John. "It's simply so that I may be able to defend myself if I am attacked."

"Av course," grinned Dennis, winking comically. "But Oi'll bet ye'll knock th' shpots off Linton if he ivver jumps on ye again."

When all this exercise was finished, Powers always had John take a sponge bath and a rub-down. Then the old pitcher thoroughly rubbed and kneaded the muscles of John's arm and shoulder, sometimes using alcohol or wichhazel. After this, an old flannel sleeve was drawn on over the arm to thoroughly protect it.

Of course Powers was able to help John a great deal in acquiring the different curves, but the boy found that many of Mart's methods were not up to date, and he also discovered that his own style of taking hold of the ball to throw a curve was different from that of his instructor.

John grasped the ball firmly between the thumb and first and second fingers of his hand, closing the third and little fingers. The ball was then pressed against the middle joint of the third finger, but was clasped tightly by the thumb and first two fingers. Then he swung the arm horizontally from the shoulder, with the palm of the hand upward, giving the ball a snapping twist as it left his hand, performed almost wholly without the aid of the thumb.

He felt that he was throwing the ball hard, but was dragging it back, just as it left his hand, with the ends and sides of the fingers. This gave the ball a spinning movement, and caused it to curve outward. He had caught on to this movement by watching Stubby Fisher, and he also noted that the Highland pitcher kept his arm slightly bent at the elbow.

Thinking the matter over, John decided he ought to be able to make the ball curve in other directions by taking hold of it in the same manner and delivering it with different motions. He reversed the twisting motion in throwing the ball, making it go out between the second and third fingers, instead of between the thumb and first finger, and was delighted after a time in perceiving that he had acquired a slight in shoot.

Then he changed the movements so that the ball spun downward, and by keeping persistently at it he obtained the drop. The rise was more difficult to get, but John was certain he would obtain it in time by making the ball spin upward when leaving his hand.

Thus John was using his brains, together with his hands, and the results were encouraging. Any one to become a good pitcher requires not only strength and skill, but brains. It is, to a certain extent, a training for the mind as well as the body.

As John progressed, Powers grew enthusiastic, finding his hardest task to hold his persistent and determined pupil in restraint so that he would not overwork to his own injury.

And John did not neglect the breathing exercises and the movements to develop the neck, waist, and muscles of his legs. He was equally persistent in his resolution to keep his mouth closed both day and night, for Powers asserted that no person who slept with his mouth open obtained perfect rest. It was extremely difficult for John to change the habit of years in this respect, but he set his teeth together when

he went to bed, and kept them there till he fell asleep. So much was this in his mind that, after a time, he awoke whenever his jaw dropped and his mouth opened while he was sleeping.

John was worried not a little over the fact that his money was limited and the lessons must soon come to an end if he should be compelled to pay for them. At last he spoke to Powers about this, approaching the subject with difficulty and confusion. Mart heard him through, and then said:

"Don't let that worry ye, my boy. I took pay for your first lessons, and my conscience has been troublin' me ever sence, for I know money comes hard to ye. I've decided not to take another red cent, and I'll help ye all I can. I like you, boy, and I want to see what I can make out of ye. If you was to become a great pitcher, I'd be proud of my work. Now, don't thank me; it's all right. We'll jest keep peggin' away, and I'm willin' to bet you'll get there in time."

TO BE CONTINUED.

EXPLORING FOR EXPLORERS

ANY ONE desirous of emulating the late Sir H. M. Stanley's exploit of thirty-five years ago might do worse than turn his attention to the Central Asian steppes, where are quite a number of missing explorers waiting to be "found." Mr. Belknap, for instance, was last heard of at Kara Kash, between Yarkand and Khotan, in the spring of 1903, and is believed to be somewhere in the Desert of Gobi, probably held for ransom by some band of nomad robbers.

Farther south, on the Tibetan plateau, the mystery of the fate of the two German explorers, Schenck and Weismann, invites elucidation. They disappeared as long ago as 1897, while prospecting near the headwaters of the Yellow River, and although they had a considerable caravan with them, no report of what has happened to them has yet filtered through to civilization. Somewhere in the terrible Takla-Makan desert, again, in eastern Turkestan, are the two missing members of Sven Hedin's expedition, who were left behind with seven camels, in 1895, while their leader pushed on ahead in search of water.

It would be useless, of course, to seek for Mr. Vince, of the South Polar exploring ship *Discovery*, who got separated from his companions on one of the sledge journeys in the vicinity of Mount Terror. He doubtless perished miserably within a few days, at most, of being lost. Somewhere within the wind-swept recesses of the Great Southern Ice Continent his eternally-frozen remains are lying as in life at this present moment. But the exact spot no one knows, or will ever know. Antarctica gives up such secrets never.

Probably, too, the three companies of the Duke of Abruzzi, separated from the rest of the expedition in 1900, near Franz Josef's Land in the Arctic Ocean, shared a similar fate. Probably! But not certainly. For Arctica is less inhospitable by far than Antarctica. There are Inuit settlements, isolated from the outer world, fringing the polar basin, in one of which the missing men may possibly have found sanctuary.

Lastly, there is the case of Andrée and his two companions, Strindberg and Fraenkel, who set out for the pole in a balloon on Sunday, July 11, 1897. A fortnight later a pigeon was shot by the crew of a fishing-vessel, and on it was found a message from the aerial voyagers, dated July 13, and reporting all well. After that, silence.

YOU may think you know what a Phonograph is; you may think you have heard one; but you do not know what a Phonograph will do—you do not know how good it can be until you have heard the

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Thomas Alva Edison invented the Phonograph idea. The Edison is his own best development of the Phonograph idea. It possesses the marvelous quality of giving you "your kind of music" better—that is clearer, more entertainingly, more musically—than any other talking, singing or playing machine. "Your kind;" that is the keynote of the Edison Phonograph. You don't have to learn to like it. It plays what you like.

"The American Nights Entertainment," a booklet which will suggest many ways of making home more desirable than the club, which will help entertain friends, which will give ideas for money-making programs, sent free on request.

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is guaranteed to go twice as far as paste or liquid polishes. It gives a quick, brilliant lustre and

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"Chip, of the Flying U"

This tale is so thoroughly imbued with the spirit of the living, breathing West, that the reader is likely to imagine that he himself is cantering over the grassy plains and imbibing the pure air of the prairie in company with Chip, Weary, Happy Jack and the other cowboys of the Flying U ranch. The story is a comedy, but there are dramatic touches in it that will hold the reader breathless. Pathos and humor are adroitly commingled and the author seems to be as adept at portraying one as the other. The "Little Doctor" makes a very lovable heroine, and one doesn't blame Chip in the least for falling in love with her. The book reviewer's task would be a pleasant one if all his work had to do with such wholesome and delightful stories as "Chip, of the Flying U." Beautifully illustrated in colors by Mr. Charles M. Russell, the greatest painter of cowboy life in America. **Price, $1.25.** Sent postpaid by the publishers upon receipt of price.

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A GREAT BOOK FREE. **"How to succeed in Business"** is the title of an extensive treatise on bookkeeping and business. It tells of the best system of accounts in the world. It explains how you can make more money and better your position right. It is just the book for beginners. It is invaluable to bookkeepers and accountants. To advertise our system and other books, we propose to give away 5,000 copies of this book absolutely free. This offer is positively genuine and without any condition whatever. Simply send your name and address and receive the book without cost. A postal card will bring it. Address,

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To get our **1906-7 Pyrography Catalogue** before new customers. Send your name today with 25 cents to pay cost of stamping, shipping, etc., and we will send you **free** this beautiful **Real Plush Pillow Top**, stamped with **Foot Ball Boy** or **Indian Maiden** design so that anyone can burn it with handsome effect. Choice of old gold, tan or light green plush; Size 17 x 17 in. Same burned, $1.50

Only One Free Top to One Address

SPECIAL Our No. 97 $2.50 Outfit, only . . **$1.60**

This splendid outfit shown above is complete for burning on plush, wood, leather, etc. Includes fine **Platinum Point, Cork Handle, Rubber Tubing, Double-action Bulb, Metal Union Cork, Bottle, Alcohol Lamp, two pieces Stamped Practice Wood** and full directions, all in neat leatherette box. Ask your dealer or we will send C. O. D. When cash accompanies order for No. 97 outfit we include **free** our 64-page Pelican Instruction Handbook (price 25 cts.) the most complete pyrography book published.

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THE LATEST SCIENTIFIC DISCOVERY.

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All the Old Methods of securing beauty and a Perfect complexion are replaced by use of the RUBBER COMPLEXION BULB. It prevents and removes wrinkles, pimples, blackheads, makes skin soft, smooth and white. A single application produces remarkable results. Blackheads in many instances banished in a few minutes. The speed with which it clears the complexion almost beyond belief. No woman owning one need have any further fear of wrinkles or blackheads. Regular price 50c. To introduce our catalog of other articles we will send the Bulb with directions for only THIRTY-FIVE cents, postpaid. You cannot afford to miss this bargain. Address,

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Standard or Self Filling

Because
He makes an honest Pen and makes it the best he knows how.

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20 page art catalog, and also the name of the nearest PARKER PEN dealer, mailed upon request.

The Parker Pen Company

64 Mill St., Janesville, Wis.

P. S.—By the way, if you are thinking of purchasing a fountain pen and will mention it when sending for catalog, we will send you, complimentary, a very nice and useful little present.

¶ Suppose you should become a victim of the strange malady, amnesia, by which a man forgets his past, and should forget, completely, all your previous life, so that your friends, your home and all that is dear to you are blotted out of your memory? Suppose, in addition, you were lost? Wouldn't you exert all your energy and search city after city in the hope of finding some little thread that would lead you back to your lost self? One victim of amnesia found himself in this position and did just that. The tale of his search and of what he found is a gripping, fascinating recital of love, life and crime. This story, **"His Other Self,"** begins in the October number of the

People's Magazine

which contains an unrivalled amount of the best reading matter.

MANY SHORT STORIES

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"The Angel and the Road to Hell"

A picturesque love story of the "good red West," by Steel Williams.

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A fantastic tale of chemistry, by Howard Fielding.

INTERESTING SPECIAL ARTICLES

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"The Overworked Schoolboy," by Nixon Waterman, which will be appreciated by all parents. "Romantic Chagres," a delightful description of historic ruins along the canal zone. Frederick J Haskin's recital of the superstitious ceremony of marriage practiced in Russia, even in this hour of bloodshed and anarchy. The views of Constant Coquelin, the noted French actor, regarding the stage and its art. Harvey Sutherland's humorous talk on "Our Intimate Enemies" of the insect world. Another interesting feature of THE PEOPLE'S is the publishing each month of some of the best sermons recently preached by American ministers. Many other shorter articles, verse, humor, anecdote, etc., making

"192 Pages of Delight" Price 10c.

STREET & SMITH, PUBLISHERS, 79-89 Seventh Avenue, NEW YORK

A Chat With You

WE are in the habit of considering our three hundred thousand-odd readers as a fraternity of brothers, bound together by a common bond of interest. The bond is the love of good adventure fiction, and an appreciation for the same. In this fraternity all are equal, but there are some who, by virtue of the fact that they have been readers of the magazine longer than the others, may be called charter members. An announcement that we have to make at the present moment will be of especial interest to these readers. It is the return of "O'Rourke."

* * *

YOU have all heard of O'Rourke, soldier of fortune and gentleman adventurer. Few stories, out of the many notable pieces of fiction that have appeared in THE POPULAR, have attracted the attention called forth by the series dealing with the experiences of this gentleman from Ireland. After the appearance of the O'Rourke series in THE POPULAR they were published in book form, and had one of the largest sales of any novel of the year. The new series of O'Rourke stories, to start in next month's issue of THE POPULAR, is even better than the original series. It is the same O'Rourke, but the new adventures are more fascinating than the old. If you have known O'Rourke in the past, all we need do is mention his name to arouse your interest. If you have not known him, it is high time that you became acquainted. He will appear once more next month in a novelette entitled "The Pool of Flame." It is easily the best piece of work that the author, Mr. Louis Joseph Vance, has ever turned out.

* * *

NEXT month's issue of THE POPULAR will contain two novelettes. One is "The Pool of Flame," just mentioned. The other is by J. Egerton, and is called "The Adventure of the Hatpin Murder." It is a passage in the life of Tommy Williams, an artist who brings mesmerism to his aid in his work as an amateur detective. It is a detective story, but it is a detective story of a new kind, with a strong element of human interest, and an intensity of excitement sure to make a deep impression on the mind of the reader.

The present number of the magazine contains the initial story of the great series by Hesketh Prichard. Next month you will learn how Geoff rode into the mountains and how he played a return match with Delirez.

* * *

WE are well accustomed to discussions by press, pulpit, and public on the brutality of football and the advisability of omitting it altogether from the curriculum of our colleges. As editors of a magazine devoted entirely

to fiction, we can express no opinion on the subject. We regard football as a spectacle of an unusually interesting nature. As it is the most strenuous of our sports, so is it the most dramatic and the most powerful in the interest and excitement that it arouses. We all know that, no matter how civilized or refined a man may be, he is apt to drop suddenly into the primeval savage when he sees the opposing half-back tearing down the field with the pigskin tucked snugly under his left arm. The gladiatorial games of the Romans are remembered and talked of to this day because of their dramatic quality. Football is the modern counterpart of the games of the amphitheater.

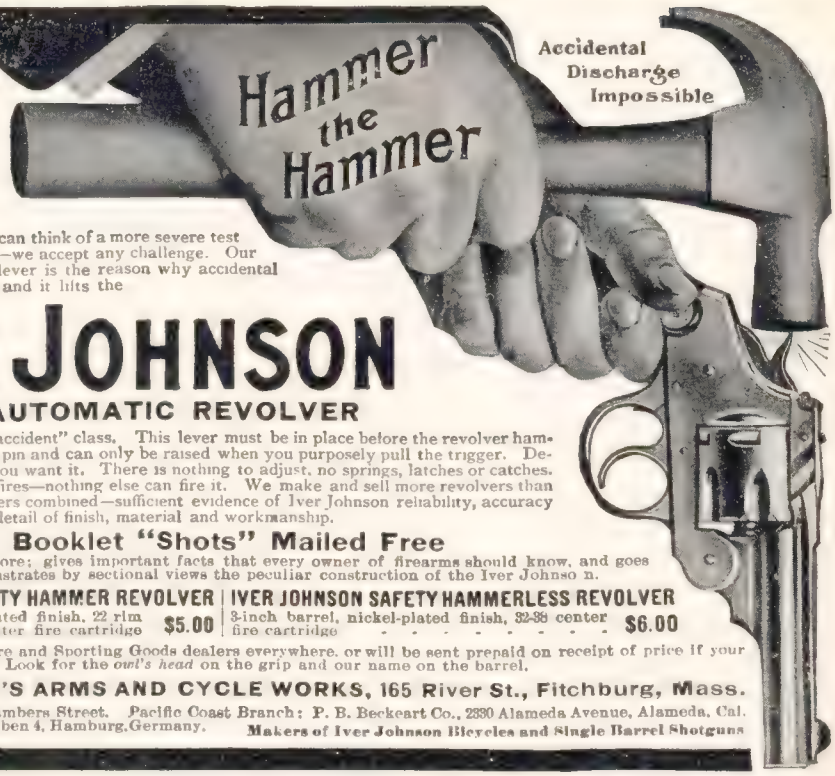
IN next month's issue of THE POPULAR we have two football stories, written from totally different points of view. One, "Man and Muscle," by Charles Kroth Moser, tells the story of a physical weakling with plenty of pluck and a determination to play good football. The other, "The White-Hot Gridiron of Remorse," is one of the best stories dealing with athletics that we have published in a long time. It is written by William Hamilton Osborne. A. H. Vandenberg contributes a story of political life to next month's magazine that is refreshing in its novelty.

MANY of our readers who wrote to us regarding the novelette "The Men With the Scars," which we published a few months ago, will be interested to learn that we have made arrangements with the author for another novelette of the same style, but considerably longer. "The Men With the Scars" has attracted an unusual amount of attention. Hundreds of people have taken the trouble to write to us and tell us how well they liked it. The best possible way that we can devise to thank them for their interest is to give them other stories of the same class, better if possible. "The Men With the Scars" belongs to a class of fiction exceedingly hard to secure. We never realize the possibilities for romance and mystery in the things that are close at hand. Many writers go far afield for material, overlooking that which lies close to their doors. We are on a still hunt for the author who can tell a story of action and interest laid in a scene with which we are all familiar.

THIS number of THE POPULAR goes to press with the largest edition that we have ever printed. Last month's issue, the largest edition up to that time, was sold out completely, so that we ourselves could not secure copies for editorial use within two weeks of its appearance on the news-stands. THE POPULAR has passed the age when magazines generally have their most rapid growth. Yet, strange to say, the circulation is increasing now in greater ratio than at any time within the history of the magazine. It is encouraging for us, but it is encouraging for you also. With every fresh advance in circulation we feel that we must make a fresh advance in the quality of the magazine. This season promises to be the greatest in our career.

ON THE GRIP

TRADE MARK IVER JOHNSON



drop it, kick it, or if you can think of a more severe test of safety, please make it—we accept any challenge. Our exclusive patent safety lever is the reason why accidental discharge is impossible, and it lifts the

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out of the "went-off-by-accident" class. This lever must be in place before the revolver hammer can touch the firing pin and can only be raised when you purposely pull the trigger. Depend on it to fire when you want it. There is nothing to adjust, no springs, latches or catches. Pull the trigger and it fires—nothing else can fire it. We make and sell more revolvers than all other American makers combined—sufficient evidence of Iver Johnson reliability, accuracy and perfection in every detail of finish, material and workmanship.

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It's full of firearm lore; gives important facts that every owner of firearms should know, and goes into the details and illustrates by sectional views the peculiar construction of the Iver Johnson.

IVER JOHNSON SAFETY HAMMER REVOLVER 3-inch barrel, nickel-plated finish, 22 rim fire cartridge, 32-38 center fire cartridge **$5.00**

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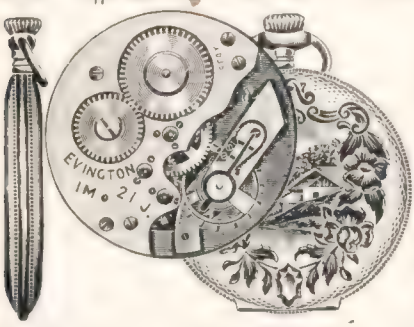
For sale by Hardware and Sporting Goods dealers everywhere, or will be sent prepaid on receipt of price if your dealer will not supply. Look for the *owl's head* on the grip and our name on the barrel.

IVER JOHNSON'S ARMS AND CYCLE WORKS, 165 River St., Fitchburg, Mass.

New York Office: 99 Chambers Street. Pacific Coast Branch: P. B. Beckeart Co., 2330 Alameda Avenue, Alameda, Cal.
European Office: Pickhuben 4, Hamburg, Germany. **Makers of Iver Johnson Bicycles and Single Barrel Shotguns**

A $20.00 WATCH FOR $5.45



These figures tell exactly what we are doing selling a $20.00 watch for $5.45

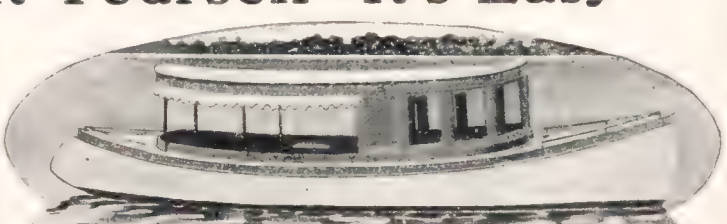
We don't claim that this is a $40.00 watch or a $50.00 watch, but it is a **$20.00 watch.** A leading watch manufacturer, being hard pressed for ready cash, recently sold us 100,000 watches—watches actually built to retail at $20.00. There is no doubt that we could wholesale them to dealers for $12.00 or $13.00, but this would involve a great amount of labor, time and expense. In the end our profit would be little more than it is at selling the watch direct to the consumer at $5.45. **The Evington Watch,** which we offer at **$5.45** is a **rubied jeweled,** finely balanced and perfectly adjusted movement. It has specially selected jewels, dust band, patent regulator, enameled dial, jeweled compensation balance, **double hunting case, genuine gold laid** and handsomely engraved. Each watch is thoroughly timed, tested and regulated, before leaving the factory, and both the case and movement are **guaranteed for 25 years.** Clip out this advertisement and mail it to us to-day with your name, postoffice address and nearest express office. Tell us whether you want a lady's or gent's watch and we will send the watch to your express office at once. If it **satisfies** you, after a careful examination, pay the express agent $5.45 and express charges and the watch is yours, but if it doesn't please you return it to us **at our expense.**

A 25-Year Guarantee will be placed in the front case of the watch we send you, and to the first 10,000 customers we will send a beautiful gold-laid watch chain, Free. **We refer to the** First National Bank of Chicago. Capital, $10,000,000.

NATIONAL CONSOLIDATED WATCH CO., Dept. 457, CHICAGO

Build It Yourself—It's Easy

ANY man or boy can quickly build a fine boat by using our guaranteed Patterns, or Knock Down Frames. Build it in your leisure hours and save from one-half to two-thirds boat builder's cost. Requires only ordinary home tools. Our Patterns are for every part of the boat where a pattern is necessary, full size, exact, perfect, and we send plain, illustrated, working instructions and itemized bill of every bit of material required. Just follow Patterns and instructions and you cannot make a mistake. Patterns from **$3** to **$20** according to boat wanted —launch, sail, row or canoe.



SPECIAL.—We will send, express paid, until September 30 only, the complete Patterns and instructions for building a 25 foot launch—our popular "325" Model, as shown above—**for $5** (regular price $15). These patterns guaranteed perfect. Send for them and see what a fine launch you can build. Catalog free, address

Pioneer Boat and Pattern Company, Wharf 34, Bay City, Mich., U. S. A.

"THE POPULAR IS CERTAINLY POPULAR—AND A PULLER."

One advertiser who used thirty-seven pages in THE POPULAR during fifteen months—quite a record for so large an amount of space in one magazine for that period — aptly states that "THE POPULAR is certainly p o p u l a r — and a puller." But this man is only one of a great many who have found THE POPULAR to be one of the best magazine propositions in the country for quick and direct returns. When he started advertising with us, we did not have the classified department. He started with a half page and has been in every issue ever since.

Now that we have the classified advertising section, you can try out THE POPULAR for $2.00 —four lines. In advertising in the classified section of THE POPULAR MAGAZINE, you have the opportunity of reaching 1,500,000 people at the smallest possibe cost—50 cents per line; no space less than four nor more than twenty lines.

If you have some real estate, an automobile, or in fact anything to sell, advertise in THE POPULAR MAGAZINE. If you have a camera you have grown tired of, a buggy you have no horse for, and you want to swap it for something useful to you, spend $2.00 for four line space in the classified advertising columns and get in touch with someone who will give you something you want for something you don't want. Look over the store-room—perhaps you will find a number of things taking up valuable space, which you will never have any use for. Other people will. You will get something in exchange for it, or sell it outright.

Again the classified columns of THE POPULAR MAGAZINE will show you the way to do it. There is no other medium that costs so little that reaches so large a number of people.

HOW TO SEND ORDERS

Please state under which classification you desire your advertisement inserted. Allow about five words to the line. Leave sufficient space for name and address. Four lines for $2.00 cash with order, 50 cents per line additional. 20 lines the largest space acceptable. No display. Remit by stamps, check or money order.

POPULAR MAGAZINE, 79-89 Seventh Ave., NEW YORK

POPULAR CLASSIFIED ADVERTISING SECTION

We have opened this classified advertising section, and invite all reputable advertisers to come in—no display—all must be set in uniform type—no objectionable advertisements accepted—nothing less than four lines, nor more than twenty lines inserted in this classified section. Our aim will be to eliminate all questionable advertisements, and we bespeak our reader's assistance to help keep this section clean and profitable to all. Rates, 50c. per line—1,500,000 readers.

REAL ESTATE

FOR SALE OR EXCHANGE, a bearing olive grove. Price $3,500.00. Soil the best. Plenty of water. Location the most healthful in Southern California. Certain cure for all Asthmatics. Address owner, Phebe B. Parker, Riverside, Cal.

$1500 CROP FRUIT, beside other produce, sold last year from this ranch, price only $3500. Near railway and schools. Another fruit ranch $2500. Others less. Perfect titles. Write for description. Colorado Land Co., P. O. Box 1075, Aspen, Colo.

FOUR MILLION acres of Canadian Wheat Land. We handle enough land to be certain of suiting you. We give you contract that if you buy 640 acres or more from us at any time, your railway fare from your home and return and necessary transportation expenses connected with your looking over our land will be paid by us at purchase, in Cash. Write for further particulars to Bick & Downey, Dept. E., 704 Center St., Calgary, Alberta, Canada.

FARMS, ANYWHERE IN NEW ENGLAND, 3,000 to select from. Send 4 cts. for Bradshaw's Farm Book. Have you a farm to sell? We will sell it, no matter where it is located. E. G. Bradshaw Co., P 25, 101 Tremont St., Boston, Mass.

DOUBLE YOUR MONEY IN 6 MONTHS. Building lots in Boston's suburbs (Greater Boston) at $10 each to introduce. High land, large lots, near electrics, new factories, schools, etc. Boston Suburban Land Co., 28 School St., Boston, Mass.

COLORADO LANDS, IRRIGATED. Pay biggest returns; make finest homes. Farms, all sizes, near Denver; garden and poultry farms near Denver on electric line, yield enormous returns. Cash home market for produce. Denver real estate, investments, cattle ranches. We sell on easy terms. Finest climate in U. S. Bank references. Write now for particulars to Dreier & Tucker, 608 Exchange Bldg., Denver, Colo.

DANBURY, CONN., offers manufacturers unsurpassed railway facilities in all directions. Will soon be the only city in Connecticut with competing railways to New York. An abundance of pure water and the lowest water rates of any manufacturing city in the country. Industries seeking new and inexpensive locations are invited to communicate with Eber L. Hodge, Sec'y Business Men's Association, Danbury, Conn.

WINNIPEG, CANADA. The "Chicago of the Last Great West." Population 105,000 and is growing faster than Chicago when it had 100,000 people. The greatest export wheat market in the British Empire. Value of new buildings erected 1905, over $10,000,000.00. If you have $5.00 or more to invest monthly, send card for particulars. Oakes Land Co., (Dept. R.), 549 Main St., Winnipeg.

CALIFORNIA LANDS FOR HOME-SEEKERS. Richest in the world; in tracts of 10 acres and up. Land will pay for itself in one year. U. L. Dike Investment Co., 231 Mason Bldg., Los Angeles, Calif.

RAPID CITY, MANITOBA. 2 choice sections land suitable for grain or stock. On little Saskatchewan River at junction of 2 railways. Will be sold at a bargain. For information write Kent Realty & Investment Co., Dept. W, Grand Forks, N. D.

3,000 MONEY-MAKING FARMS FOR SALE. "Strout's Special List," illustrating 200 of the best farm bargains in New England, New York, Delaware, Maryland and the South, free. E. A. Strout, Farm Dept. 99, 150 Nassau St., New York.

OWN YOUR HOME. Start a savings account with us by mail. We pay 4% interest, compounded semi-annually. Capital and Surplus over $10,000,000.00. Write for booklet 67 "To and From the Bank." The Colonial Trust Company, Pittsburgh, Pa.

SEASHORE BUILDING LOTS, SOMERS POINT, N. J. $5 down, $5 monthly. Most beautiful resort on Atlantic Coast. Millions of Dollars have been made in Real Estate at Atlantic City just across from Somers Point and history is repeating itself at Somers Point. Somers Point already has steamboat, trolley and steam railroad, and new electric railway of Pennsylvania R. R. from Philadelphia to Somers Point is nearly completed. Fine electric trains will be operated at short intervals and low fare. Lots in heart of City $40 and upwards. Write at once for Booklet, Map and particulars of free trip to seashore for next Summer. Daniel B. Frazier Co., 653 Bailey Bldg., Philadelphia, Pa.

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WE DESIRE AN AGENT in each town and city to introduce and accept the permanent agency for our marvelous "Nancy Hanks" Suspenders. They are the fastest sellers ever offered and an agency for same will produce a large and permanent income. Many of our agents are clearing as high as $15 per day, week in and week out. They are the greatest Xmas seller on the continent. If otherwise employed you can clear $5 per day by handling our Line evenings and noons. May we not hear from you by return mail? Hanks M'f'g Co., Augusta, Me.

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PRICES: Triple Silver-plated Set with 12 Blades, **$5**; Standard Combination Set with Shaving Brush and Soap in Triple Silver-plated Holders, **$7.50**; Extra Blades, 10 for **50c.**

Sold by all Drug, Cutlery and Hardware dealers everywhere. Send to-day for our handsome illustrated booklet.

Gillette Sales Company, 288 Times Building, New York

Gillette Safety Razor

NO STROPPING, NO HONING.

TROUSERS HANGERS GOODFORM
FLEXIBLE CLAMPS FIT THICK OR THIN

SAMPLES PREPAID FOR THE PRICE

COAT HANGER NO. 21

NO. 32

NO. 41

CLOTH LINED

NICKEL PLATED

PATENT PENDING ADJUSTABLE TO SIZE

NICKEL PLATED
25¢ 4 FOR $1

NICKEL PLATED
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Use this Goodform Closet Set, 30 Days FREE

Then return it if you want to—that's all. The charge will be canceled—or if you have paid for it, money will be promptly refunded. You know the Goodform Set, you've seen our advertisements for years. The cost of the pressing it saves will pay for it, and your clothes don't get "shiny" from the iron. You can get twice as many clothes in your closet and every garment is instantly get-at-able. But prove all this at our risk. Merchants everywhere are authorized to give you 30 days free trial. Write for names of stores or if you order from us direct give name of your clothier or furnisher. Write for booklet on care of clothes, anyway.

Ladies' Goodform Set

6 Coat Hangers No. 21 — 1 Door Loop
6 Skirt Hangers No. 20 — 1 Shoe Rail
1 Shelf Bar — **$3 Delivered**

Men's Goodform Set

6 Coat Hangers No. 21 — 1 Door Loop
6 Trousers Hangers No. 41 — 1 Shoe Rail
1 Shelf Bar — **$4.50 Delivered**

CHICAGO FORM COMPANY, 702 Garden City Block, CHICAGO, U. S. A.

THIS IS THE STYLE

of suits now worn by correct dressers everywhere. It is many years since fashion has produced such handsome and nobby garments for men's wear. **LOOK** at the long straight front effect of coat, the shaped back, with long vent. "They are beauties," will look well on old and young.

TO BE UP-TO-DATE order from us a full suit, coat, pants and vest made from the new dove Brown Worsted or a Black and White mixed cloth. We will make it exactly like the above illustration, with an extra pair of striped worsted Trousers, and an extra fancy vest, to wear on occasion; practically two full suits for the price of one suit.....

ALL ONLY $10

Besides, we send them to you in a neat, patent suit-case, without extra charge.

Let us send you a large illustration of the new suit, showing every detail in back and front. With it will send **free** newest samples for Suits, Trousers, Fancy Vests, etc. A postal card will bring them to your door. Address

THE FIFTH AVENUE TAILORS,
1051 Kesner Bldg., Fifth Ave. & Congress, CHICAGO
Reference: Royal Trust Company Bank, Cap. $1,000,000.00.

City Tailoring With Charge Privilege

We want to place your name on our books, upon the same liberal basis, with the same charge privilege our city patrons enjoy. It does not matter *where* you live.

Our art-tailored garments, made and guaranteed to perfectly fit you, by our simple, self-measurement plan, possess that snap and swing and vigorous style which your nearby tailor cannot impart.

The reason is this: Ours is specialized *tailoring*. Our designers, cutters, coat-makers, vest-makers, trouser-makers, are all specialists. Each man to his task—and master of it. *This means a degree of perfection in the finished product which no single man, nor small concern, could possibly attain.*

We save you money in the bargain.

And think of the convenient charge account privilege you enjoy!

If you want to be right—exactly correct—in every detail of your appearance, send for our handsomely illustrated style book. It is an up-to-the-minute authority on fashions for men in every particular. And, to keep you informed, we'll gladly mail you the latest news bulletin on style changes *every* month—without charge.

BELL TAILORING COMPANY,
146 East Madison Street, Chicago, Ill.

Wing Collar and Tie.

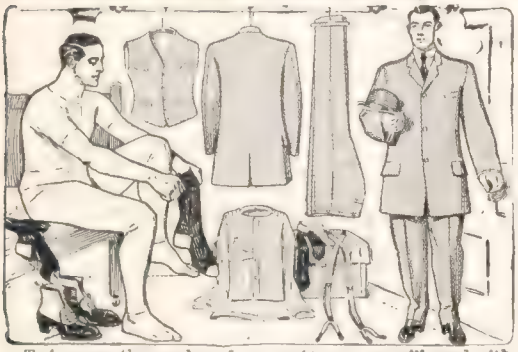
as a hungry fish darts after a crumb, and his preferences and prejudices affect powerfully young men's dress the country wide.

Influenced measurably by present-day passion for every form of game and sport in our colleges, the dress of the young man of the period smacks decidedly of athleticism. It is easy-breezy, jaunty, "loungy." Jackets are cut loose, with soft, low-lying lapels and semi-vertical pockets, and the top button is left unfastened still further to accentuate that aspect of vigorous grace so much sought in this age, when swinging a club, plying an oar, or twirling a racquet are the accepted badges of manliness.

The sketches which accompany this article reflect clearly and authoritatively the drift of the mode for autumn and winter. Jackets are not as long as they were last spring, and instead of being tightly shaped to the figure, and having sharply creased side seams, they are snug only over the back and shoulders, and side seams are left unpressed. Ventless jackets are preferred to those having deep center or side vents for no particular reason except that they afford a change. Trousers are not as wide as formerly, but this does not mean tight trousers, which are always an abomination. The cuff finish on the jacket sleeve has been discarded in favor of the plain cuff slit at the edge and fastening with one or several buttons.

Brown and green, both in dark mixtures, are the approved colors of the

This To This $10



To increase the number of our customers, we will send without extra charges, with every suit ordered, all that is needed to dress you complete in latest style from head to toe, with hat, shirt, collars, cuffs, necktie, suspenders, socks and shoes—all of reliable quality and selected to look best with each suit. **These free articles have a cash value of at least $5.00.**

Our new sack suit shown above, is cut after the latest Fall and Winter fashion. The coat has the long body effect, being nearly straight in front, with nobby flare back and center vent. This suit tailored to fit you perfectly from the newest fabrics in coloring and pattern and above outfit all for..... **$10**

Let us send you our latest fashion plate, with large illustrations of our sack suit, showing every detail of suit in back and front, also our new Fall and Winter samples, latest catalogue of men's furnishings, etc.; all will be sent free.

The Gents' Complete Outfitting Co.

Dept. A- 76, 242-244 Market Street, CHICAGO

Ref. Royal Trust Co. Bank, Chicago, Capital, $1,000,000

The Modern Laundry

Clean water and a dry cloth, and presto—the collar's clean.

"LITHOLIN" Waterproofed Linen Collars and Cuffs look exactly like ordinary linen and wear better.

Wrinkles and frayed edges impossible.

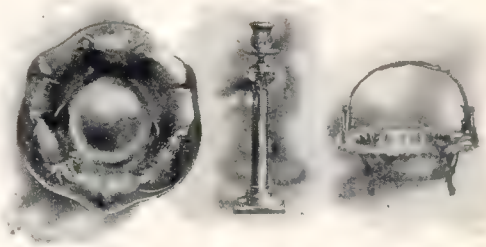
In all the up-to-date styles.

At collar shops or of us.
Collars 25c. Cuffs 50c.

THE FIBERLOID COMPANY.
2 Waverly Place, New York.

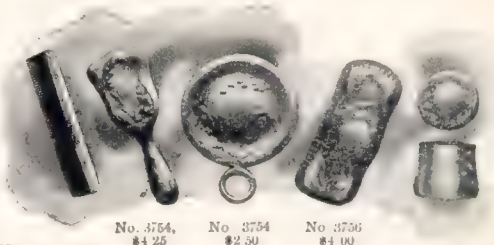
Tufts

"Better than Sterling"



No 4959, $4.50 No 3563, $6.00 No 1860, $6.75

Such prices as we quote here are only possible when some manufacturer, like Tufts, offers to let you buy from him direct at manufacturer's prices, offers to give *you* the benefit of the full retailer's and wholesaler's profits. This then is your opportunity.



No. 3754, $4 25 No 3754 $2 50 No 3756 $4 00

No 3754, $1 50 No 6006, $2 25

But furthermore, these "Tufts" prices include the cost of expressage You have no expense—nothing to pay except the low factory cost. So by dealing with "Tufts" you can easily have a "collection" of silverware at the cost of only a few pieces at your jeweler's. Hundreds of these beautiful, artistic, new designs are shown in our 1906-7 Fall and Winter catalogue, just published. This catalogue is a veritable

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Write for this book and learn for yourself the new styles, the really artistic designs, that will be popular this Fall and Winter

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New York Dictates and Sets the Styles for the Country

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All the Clever ideas enjoyed by **New Yorkers**—brought to your home with our Prices fully one-half less than your HOME TAILORS.

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THE NEW YORK TAILORS

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References by permission: *Citizen's Central National Bank, New York; East River National Bank, New York.*

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new season, though gray and blue are in no wise unfashionable. The fad of wearing high cut waistcoats was borrowed from England, and, while not acceptable to many men, it is, nevertheless, favored by those who lean toward the uncommon and the distinctive in dress. The fold or turn-down collar will be worn in the morning, the wing being reserved more particularly for the afternoon. Wing-collars with round tabs are a bit of a departure, and they promise to be notably in vogue among the discerning. Both four-in-hands and bow-ties are correct, and the colors most endorsed are such shades of red as geranium and plum, and such shades of green as hunter, ocean, and bottle. Four-in-hands are narrower, about two and one-quarter inches, and bow-ties are long with narrow, pinched centers and spreading ends.

In succeeding articles the writer will discuss men's dress exhaustively, and meanwhile will be glad to answer any question concerning the why and how of clothes that may be put by readers of this magazine.

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Boston Garter

WORN ALL OVER THE WORLD

REFUSE ALL SUBSTITUTES OFFERED YOU

The Name is stamped on every loop—

The *Velvet Grip* CUSHION BUTTON CLASP

LIES FLAT TO THE LEG—NEVER SLIPS, TEARS NOR UNFASTENS

Sample pair, Silk 50c., Cotton 25c. Mailed on receipt of price.

EVERY PAIR WARRANTED

GEO. FROST CO., Makers Boston, Mass., U. S. A.

ALWAYS EASY

Correct Autumn Jacket.

Corliss Coon Collars

are 2 for 25c,—and you cannot buy better style or a better made collar no matter what you pay.

Details of construction are never slighted—such as cutting away corners of inside material so the collar will fold more times in the laundry, without breaking.

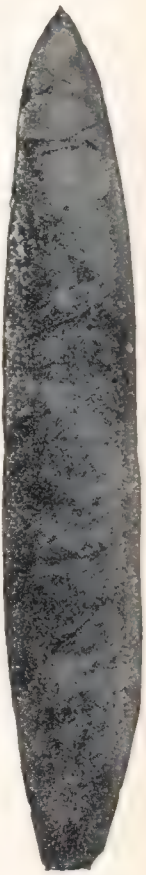
These things add greatly to the cost of making, but are worth their cost to us in the satisfaction you get from the added wear.

Our Bryson Collar is a good collar for every-day wear. Business-like, good lines, perfect fitting and comfortable.

Ask your furnisher to show you Corliss Coon Collars. If you are not willingly supplied, write us and we will fill your order by mail, direct from our factory at the regular price, 2 for 25c.

Corliss Coon & Co.,
Dept. Y Troy, N. Y.

I'll send you 50 Genuine Key West Havana Seconds for a Dollar Bill



ROUGH and ready affairs—not much to look at—but you're not smoking appearance — you're smoking **tobacco,** and the **tobacco** in these cigars **is of the sort that goes into ten-cent cigars.**

To be very frank, the only way that I can possibly produce these cigars at the money is, because the pieces of tobacco in 'em are too short for **fine shapes,** and, therefore, they become what we manufacturers call "Seconds."

I am **really** selling you a dollar's worth of tobacco at **Havana Tobacco value** with nothing added for rolling it into cigars. And I haven't wasted any money to make a good looking box or paste pretty pictures on it.

I won't guarantee that I can produce enough cigars to supply all the demand I shall receive and therefore **will not sell more than 100 at $2.00 to any one Smoker.** So if you really care to participate in this offer, my personal advice to you **is to get your order in the mail to-night.**

Incidentally I want to say that I am the largest manufacturer in the world selling cigars **directly to the consumer.** I am the only manufacturer selling **strictly for cash.** Credit accounts mean losses—can't help it—bound to be that way. Manufacturers selling on credit must make **you pay their losses.** Credit accounts mean expensive book-keeping methods and many clerks. **What I save in this way goes into my cigars.**

My business integrity can be learned by referring to Dun or Bradstreets, or the United States Exchange Bank of New York City. I have been in business for a great many years, and have built up my business through building up my reputation. Both have cost me thousands of dollars. Depend upon it that I am not going to throw away either my business standing or my reputation for the sake of your One Dollar by disappointing you.

I want to come into personal contact with every new customer and therefore when you write, address your envelope "to the proprietor of"

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Every woman should have this book. It tells how to **preserve the natural beauty** of the hair—**how to regain this beauty** if it has been lost, and **how to acquire it.** Compiled from best authorities. This book also lists all of the latest

Paris Fashions in Hair Dressing at the Lowest Prices

Hair Goods postpaid on approval. Pay when satisfied.

Extra short stem switches, well made of good quality hair and to match any ordinary shades, at the following special prices.

20 in., 2 oz.,	$ .95	200 other sizes and grades Switches, 50c to $25	
24 in., 3 oz.,	2.95		
18 in., wavy	2.45	Pompadour, Natural Curly	$2.45
Featherweight stemless switch, 22 in. long, natural wavy	$4.95	Wigs, Ladies' and Men's	$6.00 to 60.00

Send sample of your hair with your order. We will send prepaid on approval. If you find it perfectly satisfactory and a bargain, remit the amount. If not, return to us. Rare, peculiar and gray shades are a little more expensive, write for estimate. Our Free Book is full of valuable suggestions on how to become beautiful. Write for it today.

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Largest Mail Order Hair Merchants in the World

Restores Eyesight

SPECTACLES CAN BE ABANDONED

"Actina," a Wonderful Discovery That Cures Afflictions of the Eye Without Cutting or Drugging.

There is no need for cutting, drugging or probing the eye for the cure of most forms of disease, for a new system of treating afflictions of the eye has been discovered whereby all torturous methods are eliminated. There is no risk or experimenting, as hundreds of people have been cured of failing eyesight, cataracts, granulated lids and other afflictions of the eye through this grand discovery, when specialists, they state, termed the cases incurable.

General Alexander Hamilton, Tarrytown-on-the-Hudson, N. Y., highly recommends "Actina."

Louis Meyer, 93 Herman Street, Rochester, N. Y., writes: "Actina" has effected a wonderful cure in my wife's case, curing her of a severe eye trouble and I would not be without it.

Mr. A. L. Howe, Tully, N. Y., writes: "Actina" has removed cataracts from both my eyes. I can read well without my glasses; am sixty-five years old

Robert Baker, Ocean Park, Cal., writes: I should have been blind had I not used "Actina."

Hundreds of other testimonials will be sent on application. "Actina" is purely a home treatment and self-administered by the patient, and is sent on trial, postpaid. If you will send your name and address to the New York and London Electric Association, Dept. 96B, 929 Walnut St., Kansas City, Mo., you will receive absolutely free a valuable book—Prof. Wilson's Treatise on Disease.

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SUPERFLUOUS HAIR

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A boon for tired, tender, perspiring, swollen, smarting feet
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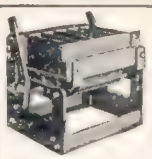

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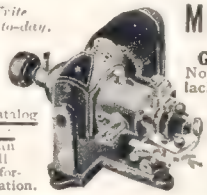

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Remember, a postal card will bring it to your very door, all charges prepaid. All correspondence strictly confidential and sent in plain envelopes. If you wish a free copy of this book and the proof of our claims, write to-day. Address the Cartilage Co., 139N, Unity Building, Rochester, N. Y.

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No Man can do his best—reach the goal of his ambitions and influence the respect, loyalty and affection of other people, unless he is well, and has the carriage and repose that come from strength and vigor.

No Woman can realize all the opportunities of her sex—be admired and sought after—loving and loved—if she lacks symmetry and grace, fine carriage and the clear, healthy complexion Nature intends her to have.

Good health is the foundation upon which mental development, physical perfection, beauty of form, ease of manner, personal magnetism, attractiveness and control of men—all are builded.

Any Man in possession of the clear eye, the ruddy cheek, the springy step and firm tread of abounding health and full understanding of life, has multiplied chances of success and achievement—is admired and envied of all mankind.

Any Woman with the fair skin, sparkling eye, the graceful carriage and perfect poise which mark one whose nerves and body are in harmony, delights all who meet her and becomes the object of every friend's affection.

And I can show you how to gain this foundation of all good things in life—this abiding health—this realization of existence which Nature intends you to enjoy. But not by upsetting your plans or changing your style of living, or, in fact, asking you to do anything that will be hard or inconvenient. I simply tell you how to do the very things you now do—eat the foods you like best—and go about your daily life as before, only doing these things so they will not harm but will benefit you.

If you are too thin, I can show you how to put on good firm flesh. If you are too stout, I can show you how to reduce your weight. If you are not fully developed I can show you how to build any part to normal condition. If you are weak or nervous, I can show you **how** to gain strength which will give you poise and self control. If you are ill, I will show you how to help Nature reassert herself and throw off disease. If you are well, I can show you how to safeguard yourself against all sickness.

Send for my little book—"The Natural Way," read it and you will understand how I can help you. I send the book **FREE** because I know, if you read it, you will appreciate it and heed what it says. Everything it tells is so plain that anyone can see and know its truth.

Write me saying you wish the book, sign your name and mail the letter today and I will send a copy of "The Natural Way" to your address, postpaid by return mail.

You will find it helpful. It is **for the well—to help them keep well—and for the sick—to help them become well.**

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Stewart Roberts,

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AINSLEE'S for October will be, for its readers, a reminder that an abundance of entertainment may be had in the midst of the serious business of the winter months.

This number will bring to a close **MAY SINCLAIR'S** great serial story, *"Audrey Craven."*

Another climax will be reached in the concluding story of the racing series by **W. A. Fraser.** This is *"A Race Card."*

There can be no question of the warmth of the welcome which will be given to **Joseph C. Lincoln** and his story, *"The Changing Years."*

Francis Metcalfe will contribute an absorbing mystery story in *"The Rest of a Stormy Petrel."*

Eleanor Hoyt Brainerd, who is known to all magazine readers, will have a fascinating story, *"Folly Farm,'* told in her best style.

A child's story for grown-ups, a type which is growing in popularity, will be **Marion Hill's** *"When She Was An Only Boy."* It is as fine and true in humor as it is in pathos.

The novelette will tell of some rather novel phases of society life. It is *"A Maid and Her Money,"* by **Alice Duer Miller.**

Other short stories will be by **Anne O'Hagan, T. W. Hanshew, Anne Warner, Theodosia Garrison, Constance Smedley** and **Pearl Humphrey.**

Of the two essays one will be on *"Born Chaperons,"* by **Margaret Sutton Briscoe,** and the other on *"The Forgotten Upper Ten Thousand,"* by **Weymer Jay Mills,** author of "Caroline of Cortlandt Street."

Channing Pollock will contribute an interesting discussion of the prospects of the theatrical season.

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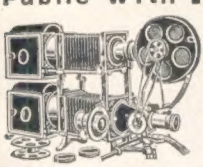

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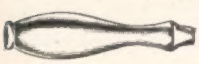

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